

CONSTRUCTIONISM

Construct

verb

con·struct | \ kən- 'strəkt \

constructed; constructing; constructs

transitive verb

1: to make or form by combining or arranging parts or elements : BUILD *construct* a bridge *also* : CONTRIVE, DEVISE *construct* a plan

2: to draw (a geometrical figure) with suitable instruments and under specified conditions

3: to set in logical order

noun

con·struct | \ 'kän-,strəkt \

1: something constructed by the mind: such as

a: a theoretical entity

b: a working hypothesis or concept

2: a product of ideology, history, or social circumstances

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021)

Blocks:

- 1. Introduction to Constructionism**
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Block 1: Introduction to Constructionism and this Essay

“This heart within me I can feel, and I judge that it exists. This world I can touch, and I likewise judge that it exists. There ends all my knowledge, and the rest is construction.”

(Camus, 2013 [1942])

NOW this is the Law of the Jungle – as old and as true as the sky;

And the Wolf that shall keep it may prosper, but the Wolf that shall break it must die.

*As the creeper that girdles the tree-trunk the Law runneth forward and back –
For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.*

(Kipling, 1895)

Constructionism is an ethical theory based on how people, social groups, norms, and systems are built. As a theory, it aims to explain ethics as it exists, how it functions, and why it is the way that it is, and accounting for how it has changed over time and between cultures, how we experience it, and what its basis is. This aims to both describe the nature of ethics and to propose a revisionary account to suggest a method to use and progress with. Camus (2013 [1942]) wrote, “all our thoughts are anthropomorphic”, which is especially true for our ethics. We, as humans, have built our ethical systems, and thus our systems reflect us - they are distinctly and definitively human in nature. What this means is that our ethics have evolved and changed with us, according to us. However, the roots of our ethics, their foundations, is the same for all, and that is what we believe to be best for us - what allows us to prosper and flourish both as individuals and as a group. This concept brings us to an essential part of constructionism, this concept of prosperity or flourishing based on the Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia. The explanation for this will be found throughout, but in more detail in Block 3. This comes back to the core idea of constructionism - that we are building people and groups up - we want to make the most ‘good’ people and societies, hence, a flourishing and prosperous person or social group. This theory and this essay

will also cover how we construct human moral psychology - how it is we make moral decisions, the role of our emotions and cognitions in motivating and forming our beliefs and decisions. With this understanding of theory and the phenomenology and psychology of how we experience, and practice moral behaviour, moral education or training will be examined. This concerns how it is we teach morality to people and how we ought to teach it, and the contributors to a holistic education. Accepting these, I will suggest where and how to apply this in developing and reforming certain critical social systems in line with this theory - focussing on the education system and justice system. I will fill this theory out more by elaborating on the theoretical position in relation to metaethical positions, particularly in relation to the question of relativism. Finally, I will anticipate and present some simple challenges that could be raised against this position and provide suggestions at responses, and also suggest directions in which this new theory could be taken and expanded upon.

This theory draws inspiration and concepts from a range of various moral/ethical theories in addition to different scientific theories. There are elements and concepts from philosophical positions such as constructivism, consequentialism, perfectionism, deontological principles, contractualism, virtue theory, evolutionary philosophy, intuitionism, game theory, triune ethics, and error theory. With regards to (human) science, I refer to research in evolutionary theory, neuropsychology, social and behavioural psychology, and systems theory. Whilst this may sound like an overwhelming list, This essay simply utilises key concepts tied to these theories to advise concepts and provide explanatory guidance. It would be ridiculous to throw away the huge depth and breadth of prior work, and I will argue that these are useful pieces of the puzzle that is human ethics. This project also touches on topics in jurisprudence

and political theory. All of these theories are fundamentally tied to the nature of humanity, how we function in relation to others, and what defines our flourishing.

It is important to note the limitations of this project, as there are significant restrictions on the scope of this essay. Therefore, I cannot detail everything that I would like to, and thus I may need to simply brush over some concepts that, in reality, are much deeper and complex than the scope of this project allows. Thus, if it seems that I have oversimplified or simply lack the depth and detail that perhaps ought to be included, keep this in mind. I will, therefore, at times, need to point to the work of others whose work is far more extensive and who have far more expertise than I where it would be impractical to attempt to summarise the good work of others.

It will also be useful for me to begin by defining some of the terms that I will use in this essay, at least in how I will use them. This is important for clarity in what will follow in the writing. Here, I will speak of prosperity and flourishing repeatedly, and by this, I mean the state of excellence or growth in a function - in essence, the state of being in a 'good' state (see more in Appendix 1). For example, a flourishing plant will be growing exceptionally well according to its natural functions - it will be in a 'good' state of being. Applied to people, a flourishing person would be one who is excelling as a person. They are displaying *virtues* and are developing, learning, and playing a positive role in their systems. In addition to this, I outline a series of factors which contribute to meeting the needs of a flourishing agent. 'Human flourishing', or as I will use interchangeably 'prosperity' or simply 'flourishing', is the state of a human agent who excels in their function(s), displays virtues of character and expertise in living. They are not simply operating as is necessary and merely functioning; a flourishing agent is *more*. I will

separate this term from welfare - as a popular ethical position is 'welfarist consequentialism' and whilst this theory draws similarities in some areas, it is also very different. Welfare is when one has everything they need in life, they are living a good life and be in a good state. Welfare is a passive quality, of what is instrumentally good for a person (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018). This, for me, is more a baseline. To flourish is to go a step further and be greater - to do something with what they have now, they have what they need. This is a move from being a good, competent moral agent to a flourishing, great, expert moral agent. This is then an active concept of what is not only good for the person but what is good of the agent. Whilst it has been established that humans essentially have a baseline of psychological happiness, this is not the sort that comes with flourishing; it is more a sense of fulfilment and contentedness in the self that they are flourishing.

This leads on to my next term: virtue. A virtue (in this conception) is a characteristic of something (whether this is an action, object, or living being) that positively contributes to the achievement of an end or the performance of a function (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018). To elaborate, a virtue of an action is a characteristic of the action that helped it achieve its intended effect or function. For example, a virtuous swing of an axe would have characteristics such as speed, accuracy, and strength, which would be conducive towards splitting wood (the purpose of the action). A virtue of an object may lie in its achievement of an end or its ability to perform functions. For example, an axe may have virtues such as balance and sharpness, which allow it to chop wood more effectively and efficiently than one lacking such virtues, i.e., a blunt, unwieldy axe. A virtuous person displays virtues following our functions, goals and nature. What more is there for us to do than to build ourselves and our world to the best of our ability and strive to build and be the best of ourselves? For much broader study of Aristotelian-

based virtues, I would guide towards Julia Annas, who has provided a much more thorough investigation of virtue than I could include within the scope of this paper.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the basic structure of this theory and explain further the direction I will take in this paper.

Block 2: FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE

Constructionism takes a two-layered, bi-directional approach to sociality and ethics. The project will take a similar project to Plato's Republic (Emlyn-Jones & Preddy, 2013 [Plato]), but in a reverse manner, building the system based on the individual. The two interdependent layers are the ethics of the individual and the ethics of the system. The two are not identical in their constitution, of course, but are supervenient/contingent on each other. This interdependence arises thusly: the evolutionary pressures on humanity have shown that people survive and prosper better as groups as opposed to on their own (Boyd & Richerson, 2006; Tomasello et al. 2012). Thus, humanity has adapted to be a social animal - one that operates best as part of a larger group. In order for the group to function, there must be an agreement - a structure to operate within. This takes the form of a sort of social contract (Rousseau, 1762 via Morris, 2000). As a result of being in a group, people live better, learn better, and in essence, become better functioning people (Narvaez 2014). The concept of the group is dependent on those who

make up the group (there is no group without its people). So, if it is a group full of individuals who are not virtuous, then the group as a whole will not be virtuous, and consequently will not function properly. If people cannot trust each other and act only for themselves and against others, a group cannot function. A 'good' or virtuous/flourishing group will be necessitated if it is full of virtuous people - people will change and improve the group according to their virtues and how best to prosper. This acts in a cycle of positive reinforcement: good people will make a good group, which helps them be better people, improving the group as a consequence and so on, and the opposite for a 'bad' group. Further interdependence is seen in the beliefs of people and groups in what is considered to be good/bad, right/wrong.

An individual's knowledge is based predominantly on three things: socialisation, education, and personal imagination (including personal experiences, thoughts, elaboration etc.). The content of what people are taught within their social group(s), their beliefs and conformity to social norms are based on their experience of these groups. Family upbringing, education, social norms and expectations, and laws/rules - all of these contribute to shaping people's beliefs about morality. This is an example of an accepted paradigm (Kuhn, 2012) of morality - how we have conceived of it and integrated it as part of our system of beliefs about ourselves and the world. In a mirroring of its constituents, the group structure and paradigm will either develop or be perpetuated. Suppose people accept the paradigm and simply operate according to norms without developing virtue and moral independence. In that case, social norms and such will remain the same; however, if people see a better way for the group to work - a way that is more virtuous and allows both the group and its people to prosper more. Then this improved way becomes the new norm, and the cycle repeats itself (Kuhn 2012). Both people and social groups ought to aim to be in a state of constant

growth and improvement. It is clear that we have not found the ideal, flourishing society, so we must learn more and build according to what we know or believe to be best for us. We build upon the foundations we are provided with, and in doing so, provide a new level for people to build upon.

These are just some of the ways that a social group affects the individual's moral beliefs. In addition to the formation of beliefs, a group or society has a duty to its constituent members. Primarily, in providing a structure within which its constituents may flourish and prosper and contribute positively back to the community. These are the places for social systems; people have basic needs such as safety/security (for the self and the extensions of the self, such as personal belongings), education, and physical needs. These are the foundations and structure upon which individuals are able to grow; one who must concern themselves with their physical safety and security or physical needs (i.e., food, shelter) does not concern themselves with growth, only survival (Narvaez, 2008; 2018). One who does not know how to flourish or grow lacks the ability to grow simply out of ignorance of it.

In the other direction, a virtuous, flourishing person necessarily positively affects the world around them, themselves, the people around them, and their groups. The group functions to support the individual, and the individual, in their functioning and flourishing, supports the group.

Block 3: Layer 1: Individual Level

According to Constructionism, what is truly good for us as individuals is to prosper and flourish in ourselves and our function(s). We ought to endeavour to become the best person we can be - in character, for ourselves and in relation to other people.

Characteristics accepted as positively contributing to flourishing and prosperity are called virtues, and those that vitiate the same flourishing are vices. Virtues describe something that has a positive value - something that is good. We ought to strive not merely to behave in line with such values but to embody them - to be virtuous. To be virtuous is to be on the path towards flourishing. When in combination with other factors such as expertise, cognitive skill, and the operation in their various social systems, one can be said to be a flourishing moral agent.

Virtues, as traits or characteristics, are a definitive part of something (Crisp, 2014). So, an act may be virtuous on its own - a single occurrence of wisdom or bravery, but it requires much more than this for something or someone to *be virtuous*. The virtue must be a definitive part of the character of something - a consistent manifestation/embodiment of the virtue; to be brave is to embody the virtue of courage - to act in such a way consistently and with a complete understanding of what the virtue entails. To fully embody virtue requires a certain level of skill, understanding, and expertise. To know what the virtue is, how to apply it in varying situations, to have the

correct corresponding psychological motive and decision-making processes, and why particular actions are appropriate or not.

An analogy for virtues of character (similar to the 'skill analogy' of Aristotle (Crisp, 2014)) may be seen in games, or as I will use here, team sports (I will return to this analogy later in this essay).

A 'good' or virtuous player has characteristics suited to their role in the game. A player may have basic physical virtues such as being strong, fast, agile, powerful etc., which can be trained to improve. In addition to these features, a team player must have relevant skills, such as when and how to interact with teammates, what techniques to use at which time; when and how to pass a ball to their teammate, and how to execute a 'virtuous' pass so that it brings about the desired result. A player must understand the rules of the game and how it is played to match the relevant virtues to the aims they are trying to achieve. Similarly, a person must train and work on how to act virtuously and how to think, decide, and apply these virtues appropriately.

The competent or expert sports-person or athlete will have dedicated hours upon hours training in the principles of how to perform different techniques. This includes how to perform them and apply them, the function and 'why' of the method, and execution. For example, a tennis player may spend hundreds or thousands of hours only training a forehand stroke. How to hold and swing the racket, how hard to swing to hit the ball in the right way, add different types of spin, and the best shot to play relative to their situation (their own and opponent's position). All of this is required to make the best or a virtuous swing. When the player becomes competent, they will not have to think about all of these; they will simply apply what they have learned to their situation, decide, and play in the split second they have. The mastery of these skills and the fostering of other relevant virtues, i.e., speed, fitness, agility, understanding of the sport

etc., will create a good/virtuous/expert player. When one becomes an expert, the right or best move comes automatically or intuitively because of the internalisation of these 'virtues'. However, the expert is also has a deep understanding of the actions and situations, and is able to challenge their own knowledge and expertise. This is only regarding individual skill or expertise, and there are a host of other 'virtues' necessary in team sports that allow players to cooperate and function together as a unit. This is analogous to the social systems that we exist within.

These principles are precisely the same when applied to be a good/expert moral agent. This moral development builds a moral person who understands what goes into a good action and can simply be good and perform good acts as a result.

This also explains both cognitive, reactive, and intuitive elements in moral processes and decision making.

A virtuous constructionist agent also has properly refined psychological management skills, including emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and decision-making skills. It is vital for our flourishing that we understand more of why and how emotions are elicited, how this affects us, and how to produce an appropriate output for this emotional motivation. This, for reasons of general health and well-being in addition to morally significant situations, is important to have a healthy awareness and understanding of the whole self. In order to understand how to flourish in ourselves, we ought to have some understanding of what this means for our emotions. Critical thinking is crucial in the ability to think for oneself, analysing situations and potential outcomes of our actions, and being able to think *about* ourselves, our actions, and our virtues (or lack thereof). Avoiding dangerous cognitive habits such as 'groupthink' (Janis, 1971) and biases is essential in that we must be aware of what goes into our decisions and how these affect outcomes. This is because we are fallible agents, and if we are unaware of

these, they may severely corrupt our moral agency. This skill allows us to understand both ourselves and the world around us and decide how best to be. Decision-making skills are essential in our lives, from making quick and straightforward fundamental decisions in day to day living or more drawn-out meaningful choices. Deciding on an action is a core skill and making the right decisions is a contributor to flourishing. Nothing can get done without deciding on a move and carrying it out. It is that simple. So, it makes sense to make it a skill and do it well. These basic skills are important for our own wellbeing and our success in interaction with others and performance in the social system. To be able to think and feel in adaptive, positive ways is a valuable skill. Thus, an understanding of our own psychology and how to use the tools we have at our disposal is an invaluable part of human life so that we may get the best out of ourselves. Experts are able to intuit actions and perform without thinking but are also capable of effective effortful consideration and deliberation, and also of challenging their intuitions.

I have spoken on the needs of individuals, and I will now outline a few of what I see as 'needs' for a flourishing person/life in line with the constructionist theory and aims. These are not needs for mere basic survival and function but for growth and prosperity. Firstly and most basic are those survival needs to be met - nutritive requirements and shelter so that one is not at immediate risk of starvation or exposure. People ought to have at least a basic sense of security so that they may have a stable base upon which to stand and grow without desperate fear of being torn down. People also need a sense of belonging or integration - relationships, interactions, a sense of belonging to a group or something outside of themselves that is greater than themselves alone (Ryan & Deci, 2012). Autonomy is another basic need (Ryan & Deci, 2012). Even if we are part of

something larger, that part is our own, and we have an individual identity, purpose, function, and life to live. This means that we need some sense of being ourselves - relating to our thoughts and actions - that we are ourselves and our person. To flourish, people should be competent (Ryan & Deci, 2012) and feel and consider themselves able to deal with what is put in front of them. This is the last need that I will address in this regard. Individual agents ought to be provided with the building blocks to have a life, competency and eventually expertise in living well. For this, people need training, education, attachments to competent/expert models, and the opportunity to creatively express and test themselves and the world. In short, we need the building blocks for a good life and the skill to construct one.

These skills cover a few areas. To use the Greek; phronesis (practical wisdom), praxis (practical know-how), prohairesis (right decision), and arete (excellence or virtue).

These building blocks combine to make a moral expert, or at least someone who is morally competent. Phronesis or practical wisdom is the ability to think and carefully consider our actions and technical or practical situations. This attribute allows one to analyse a situation, potential actions, and their corresponding possible outcomes, and how to judge these. Phronesis also recognises and understands our own internal 'situations'. By this, I mean we may use this to understand our emotions, automatic/unconscious cognitive processes and intuitions and use these to make judgements rather than be carried away by them. With this, we can analyse, understand, and manage our situations, both internal and external, to clearly see what is presented to us. This wisdom allows us to be sensitive to and understand moral situations. Praxis, or practical know-how, works between phronesis and virtue in that it is the ability to apply wisdom and virtue in action. It is all well and good to know what to do, but this is useless without the knowledge and ability to act. Prohairesis, or right decision, is the

ability to weigh decisions and choose a path. Indecisiveness is the bane of right action - for if one is unable to decide on what to do in a situation, then one is virtually impotent. The ability to deliberate on and make the right decisions at the right times is a critical skill in life - especially in situations with higher stakes. For example, we may judge a situation such as someone in a medical emergency in a public place. We see a person at risk and that they are in need. Phronesis allows us to manage quick intuitions and emotions such as shock and compassion and judge the external situation. For example, if there are any other risks, what the person's needs are, what actions could be undertaken, e.g., call an ambulance, give first aid, ignore the situation, wait and watch until someone else does something (the bystander effect (Latané & Darley, 1968)), and what consequences these actions might produce. Virtue might motivate us to do the courageous, caring thing and get help for this person in need - so we are disposed to help this person in need. Praxis may show us how we could go about this, how to perform CPR if the person is not breathing, how to stem bleeding if that is an issue, or to calm someone down if they are distressed. Prohairesis is the final part before action - deciding on what the best option is. As a result of this process, one might choose to check if the person in an emergency is breathing and has a pulse, checking if there are any apparent injuries and administering first aid and calling for those nearby to stop and call for professional help whilst comforting the person as possible. This integrates the process of expertise and produces the best outcome presented. The moral expert is able to judge a situation wisely, see potential actions, how to implement them, decide which is best motivated by virtue and would produce the best outcome, deciding, and then acting it out in a fast process, much like an elite sportsperson must react to the game in front of them and select the best action in a split second.

The way in which humanity has developed and evolved means that we function and flourish best as part of a larger social group. In this way, a well-functioning social group is a key factor in human flourishing, as the group affords many advantages which the individual would not otherwise have. Such benefits include structure to living - providing a foundation on which to build, learn, teach, and live. This includes the formation and application of a social contract, a justice system, an education system for skills, including morality. A social group also provides the necessary environment and building blocks with which to form attachments and build relationships. These attachments teach us so much about life and living and contribute to healthy neurobiological development and 'preparedness' for prosperous ethical living. Social groups allow for the sharing of knowledge about many things in addition to human flourishing. This sharing and learning do, in fact, contribute to flourishing by way of showing better methods of other parts of life to flourish. Social interaction and integration also allow for another essential part of biopsychosocial flourishing; Play. Play is vital for people of all ages, although more so for younger people. Play is how we may express joy and creativity - and is a method of producing happiness and contentment as well as catharsis - a priceless thing to have in a life that can be challenging.

How one develops these skills is an essential process in a flourishing person's life. This moral education and training is how we build good people. I will address this extremely important element in more depth in the section on Moral Development.

So, why are these things I have described so far 'good'? There are two conceptions of 'good' I will discuss. Firstly, objective 'goods' which are instrumentally or intrinsically good for us as humans in that they contribute positively to our flourishing. Secondly, the moral good; the normative value we decide to assign or 'superadd' (Locke, 1975) to

certain things, which we base upon those instrumental and intrinsic goods which lack this normative quality. Precisely what a perfectly virtuous person might be or look like we do not yet know. We also do not know the objectively perfect method of becoming a perfectly flourishing and virtuous person. Therefore, rather than having true knowledge of an objective good for us, our conception or beliefs about the good remains abstract and intersubjective. Thus, our ideas of the good for human beings is an accepted paradigm (Kuhn, 2012) of our beliefs about what best conduces to flourishing and prosperity. This, in turn, is based on our observation of facts about ourselves - our functioning and what tends to contribute positively towards such flourishing. It is an abstract human value (moral values and beliefs) based upon natural objective facts (re. flourishing). This was argued by Anscombe (1958). Anscombe argued that because we do not yet have a full understanding of humanity and human flourishing, all moral philosophy is irrelevant and pointless as it would be based on an incomplete understanding and flawed 'knowledge'. However, I disagree that this invalidates the current paradigm and makes it useless - we must make the best of what we know and have and work to develop it continually and make room for growth.

Human flourishing is based on natural facts about us, how we have evolved and developed to function over time. These facts are hugely complex and some almost supernatural as we have become more developed and have shaped our human world. There are facts about culture, history, psychology, sociology and many more abstract human-made concepts that define us. Before what we might call civilisation, the largest part of our evolutionary history was spent in small-band hunter-gatherer groups (SBHG) (Tomasello et al. 2012). These were small nomadic groups that depended on each other's virtues, cooperation, and collective systems to survive and flourish. What methods were used in these groups differed according to their environment - what was

needed to survive in these different conditions caused us to develop and evolve different ways of living. This difference in flourishing is not an issue; it is still flourishing and the same principles, simply adapted to a different circumstance. We have many different conceptions of moral exemplars - who are virtuous and flourishing in different ways. This is entirely valid as we have various roles in life, and the good life may be very different for different people, but they are all displaying virtue. Flourishing is itself valuable. Flourishing or prospering is, by definition, the state of being in a good state. Thus, it is definitively good to be in a good state. This means that quite literally, what we define as good for us (in the sense of human flourishing) is good for us (in the moral sense). It is important to note that this is not an argument for moral realism, as there is still a separation in that the normativity is still man-made. I simply argue what we base our subjective normative theories on is objective. This objective *amoral* value shapes why things such as virtue, system structure such as by a social contract, and other conditions and factors conducive to human flourishing are *morally* good for us.

Now I have outlined the good for the individual; I will suggest how we achieve this. The philosophising of what is good is fantastic but essentially impotent without the 'hows' and applications. These primarily consist of meeting needs to provide conditions for someone to be able to flourish and providing them with the tools to build on these to achieve more and build into a flourishing individual. This is a complex, biopsychosocial process. At the biological level, of course, optimal conditions ought to be provided for the healthy development of the nervous system and, ideally, the entire physical self. This is achieved by giving the correct stimulation to encourage growth and building up of the body. This includes attachments and social interaction, which is essential in establishing brain development and the neurological basis for a (pro)social disposition.

One factor in proper neurobiological development and maintenance is play (Narvaez, 2008, 2009, 2014, 2018). Play allows for nervous stimulation, socialisation, learning, creativity cultivation and expression, and, importantly, relaxation. This is not only essential in early life but throughout the entirety of one's life. Education and learning come later on in early life and should not be forced too early, resulting in too much stress. But it is a necessary part for brain development and preservation. Attachment, Social Interaction, Play, and Education/Training are just some factors (I am sure that I have likely missed some, which I hope others may pick up on) that are important in building biological preparation for flourishing (Narvaez, 2008, 2014).

Building a flourishing psychology is slightly more difficult due to the simple unpredictability of life and what may affect us psychologically. We must not only build methods, habits, and practices for building and maintaining healthy psychological functioning; we must also know how to deal with things that affect us. For this, education and training will play a more significant part in teaching us how to be aware of unhealthy processes and functions and how to change these and how to think well, understand and accept our feelings, and be mindful of what affects us unconsciously. I will leave these exact perfect methods to the psychologists, as this is beyond the scope of this project to fit all of the various potential factors, practices etc., herein.

Finally, and most important and relevant to this project is the building of a flourishing character. Moral and character education is a lengthy journey and requires much more attention than it is currently given. We must teach people how to be good people - but this is simply not happening in any significant way or is left up to parents or some morally relevant topics in other studies. One must have a teaching degree and relevant qualifications to teach an academic lesson in school to a child, such as History. Yet, we do not think that teaching how to live a good flourishing life is important enough, as

remembering the date of a battle is more significant. People, especially young people, need moral exemplars, teachers, and coaches to teach moral expertise. Again, this is an expertise like many others and requires learning, practice, and effortful thinking and reflection. For this, I will outline the four major components necessary for a full, well rounded moral education. The first is a model to learn from - a moral exemplar/'expert'; someone who is competent and knowledgeable about being a moral agent. The second component is a theoretical understanding. This includes action-guiding principles, an understanding of virtue and flourishing, social systems, and a conscious grasp of all the elements that go into these. Thirdly, motivation - we must encourage a striving towards the good. This can be cultivated both consciously and unconsciously in building emotive drives towards the good. Unconscious dispositions likely can more effectively be instilled at an early stage in development, with more conscious reasoning and 'oughts' more understandable later on as cognitive abilities develop over time. Finally, a grasp of why this is being learned, why these things are good, and why they ought to strive for this and work to build themselves into a flourishing self and help others build themselves and a flourishing system. The 'why' is important not only because people learn better when this is clear, but also so it is open to challenge and growth itself. These components, combined with time and training/exercise of the good, virtues, and these principles, will build a flourishing, good character. Now, to go further into detail about these components. Narvaez provides one helpful outline of an ethical expert:

“ Experts in ethical judgment have many tools for solving complex moral problems. They use reason about duty and consequences, responsibility, and religious codes. Experts in ethical focus cultivate ethical self-regulation that leads them to prioritize ethical goals. They foster an ethical identity that leads them to revere life and deepen commitment.

Experts in ethical action know how to keep their “eye on the prize,” enabling them to stay on task and take the necessary steps to get the ethical job done. They are able to intervene courageously and take initiative for others. Experts in a particular excellence have more and better organized knowledge about it, have highly tuned perceptual skills for it, have deep moral desire for it, and have highly automatized, effortless responses. In short, they have more content knowledge and more process knowledge” (Narvaez, 2006)

To unpack this further, we may divide this into different constituent parts: Knowledge, Processing skills, Identity/character, virtue, drive, and sensitivity/understanding. The knowledge part of an expert is in knowing the theoretical goods and guiding principles. Processing skills are what I would label the psychological decision making process. This includes deep reasoning, emotive reactions and expert intuitions which arise from the other areas. The identity/character facet is the fostering of becoming a good, flourishing person, essentially buying into this character of not only doing good but *being good*. ‘Drive’ covers the motivation and the discipline to do/be good, and continue to do so, and the desire to do good for others and help build everything around them up with them. Sensitivity is the understanding of nuance in principles and ethically relevant context where this may require a deeper understanding and expertise to navigate. This is also the awareness of when moral situations arise. Virtue is the final piece; when one is already practised and disposed to do good and be good, one can exercise such virtues and perform virtuous actions according to the situation. I will delve deeper into these concepts and processes in the section on moral education. A moral education is dependent on the existence of these experts, and whilst theoretically

it may seem complicated, it is clear that such moral experts exist, and under the directives of this theory, we can build many more.

In conclusion, the good for the individual is to flourish. How one reaches this state is complex and contingent on a variety of contributing factors. These include physical and psychological needs, moral education and the development of moral and psychological expertise (including virtue), and a social system in which to live and work.

Block 4: LAYER 2: SYSTEMS LEVEL

“Another phenomenon of almost universal significance for all disciplines is that of the interaction of an ‘individual’ of some kind with its environment. Every discipline studies some kind of ‘individual’ - electron, atom, molecule, crystal, virus, cell, plant, animal, man, family, tribe, state, church, firm, corporation, university, and so on. Each of these individuals exhibits ‘behaviour’, action, or change, and this behaviour is considered to be related in some way to the environment of the individual - that is, with other individuals it comes into contact or into some relationship. Each individual is thought of as consisting of a structure or complex of individuals of the order immediately below it - atoms are an arrangement of protons and electrons, molecules of atoms, cells of molecules, plants, animals, and men of cells, social organisations of men. The ‘behaviour’

of each individual is 'explained' by the structure and arrangement of the lower individuals of which it is composed, or by certain principles of equilibrium or homeostasis according to which certain 'states' of the individual are 'preferred'... Another phenomenon of universal significance is growth... There is hardly science in which the growth phenomenon does not have some importance...another aspect... is the theory of information and communication..."

Excerpt taken from General systems theory - the skeleton of science (Boulding, 1956)

The second 'layer' of the constructionist theory concerns the systems level: when individuals come together in a social group. The social system includes a few fundamental parts. The most significant and most crucial part of the social system is its individual people, who are its constituents - these are the truly fundamental building blocks in this system. The other components concern the functioning of these individuals in the overarching structure. One such part is the interactions and relations between the individuals in the system/social group. This is how they work together and develop and play social 'games'. The final part is the subsystems and structures that form the system's functions - these are structures like a contractarian style system of rules/regulations/principles, political/justice/education systems that all elementally function to serve the individuals, building up their interactivity, mutual benefit and flourishing on both individual and systems levels. Building a social system is much like building any structure or machine - we have the raw materials (individual agents), their connections, and their functional processes and systems. Systems-level flourishing then

is the combination of flourishing individuals and virtuous systems and positive interactivity, which promote and encourage the flourishing of the whole group.

Systems theory outlines the functioning and structure of systems, ranging from the most fundamental sub-atomic systems/individuals, to the more complex human and social systems. Therefore, this is applicable to the systems formed by groups of individual moral agents in a social group.

I will first use an outline of some of the terms used in systems theory based on the work of von Bertalanffy (1956) and Boulding (1956) to explain this better:

- **System:** An entity made up of interrelated, interdependent parts.
- **Boundaries:** Barriers that define a system and distinguish it from other systems in an environment.
- **Homeostasis:** The tendency of a system to be resilient with respect to external disruption and to maintain its key characteristics.
- **Adaptation:** The tendency of a system to make the internal changes to protect itself and keep fulfilling its purpose.
- **Reciprocal Transactions:** Circular or cyclical interactions that systems engage in such that they influence one another.
- **Feedback Loop:** The process by which systems self-correct based on reactions from other systems in the environment.
- **Throughput:** Rate of energy transfer between a system and its environment over time.
- **Microsystem:** The system closest to the client.
- **Mesosystem:** Relationships among systems in an environment.

- **Exosystem:** A relationship between two systems that has an indirect effect on a third system.
- **Macrosystem:** A larger system that influences clients, such as policies, administration of entitlement programs, and culture.
- **Chronosystem:** A system composed of significant life events affecting adaptation

(Wikipedia contributors, 2021)

Now to apply these terms to this theory. Whilst proponents of systems theory argue that even a person can be viewed as a complex system (Boulding, 1956), I will be focussing on the social group as the encompassing system. The social system consists of its individuals as its interrelated, interdependent parts who rely on each other and interact. There is not only one system in a social group, and one agent may be part of many different smaller systems within the larger social group. These microsystems can be your family and friends, or the neighbourhood you live in, a team or society one is part of, a company, or any other small social groups that an agent can be a part of.

These systems all operate according to their macrosystems - which prescribes the metaphorical 'operating system' - it defines how the other systems function. These are realised in the contractarian style laws, policies, rules, norms etc. and social constructs such as the justice system and the education system shaping how people live.

Regarding adaptation and feedback, this is when the social system is stimulated, influenced, and caused to change. For example, this could be due to its environment or the new learning of the constituents. When there is perceived a better way for the social system to function and flourish, it may change and develop and build to fulfil its function better. This is what we call social change and moral progress. When we shift into a new paradigm of how best to flourish and new, better methods are found, we may

progress into this new conception of the good and closer to the (potentially) best way to function and flourish.

The flourishing of systems and individuals is almost necessarily interdependent. The system is so integral to flourishing as an individual, as this is both how we, as humans, function and that the system's functional purpose is to encourage and develop the flourishing of its constituents. So, if the system functions well and is a 'good' system, it will produce good people as it will build them up and provide a foundation and an environment in which to flourish. Likewise, if the system consists of flourishing people, these flourishing people will contribute positively to the system. A flourishing agent builds not only themselves but also the other individuals around them; they have positive interactions with others. Furthermore, they create good, virtuous systems and macrosystems that reflect their own virtues. This acts in a positive feedback loop where the individuals build the system to be better, which in turn builds the individuals to be better, and (should in theory) repeat in such a cycle of mutual benefit, prosperity, and flourishing. So, these constituent parts of individuals, interactions, and systems all build each other up and enable the striving towards human flourishing; the good. This is the core of constructionism. This is the good on a system level - to build virtuous, sound systems, good individuals who operate within the system and help reciprocally construct the system when it needs to be adapted, and positive interactivity between individuals and between individuals and systems.

Returning to the sports team analogy, if the team functions well - the coaches have taught them the skills to play, the rules are respectable, and the individuals in the team interact and play well together, each fulfilling their role, then the team will be good. The players do not only train for themselves and build themselves. They must train as a team and learn how to cooperate and communicate and display virtues that contribute

to this positive functioning of the team. Thus, the group supports the individual, and the individual player supports their team in playing their role and helping the others play theirs. Of course, they must operate within the rules of the game, but these rules are able to be revised with input from the players by the governing body if there is seen a way to improve the sport. The rules are there to protect the players and the game, so if there is a better way to formulate the rules and play, they are adapted. A good player contributes to the team not only by fulfilling their own role but also by raising up those around them. A good team trains its individual players to be good, expert players who play well within the team and the rules.

So, we may observe that it is not only individual virtues that need to be developed but virtues that facilitate good relationships and interactions with the rest of the team/social system. These are sometimes called civic virtues and are more extensions of individual virtues. Examples of these include honesty, respect, justice, and the will to contribute to the systems of which the individuals are a part.

The complexity of human systems is impressive and elusive. People can be parts of many different systems, subsystems, and microsystems of varying sizes and governed by different macrosystems within others. Therefore, I will introduce two more terms relevant to this: Proximity and Weighting. Proximity is the perceived closeness an individual feels to their system - this allows for partial relationships and connections with those things that an agent holds close to them. Such systems' proximity will likely be a motivating factor in how one acts and builds this system. Weighting, on the other hand, is concerned with the importance of a system - how significant a system is. If a system has more weight, then we may have a stronger duty to contribute and follow their macrosystems over that of others. A weightier system may also demand more contribution to the maintenance and construction of it. Thus, we must balance our

actions within these systems based on these values and meet their requirements. For example, we may hold ourselves in closer proximity to people close to us and desire to spend more time in these relationships. However, another system, e.g., a company that we work for, has more weight on us. We have an obligation to meet the expectations of our contribution to that system over that of the system we feel closer to, but which has a lesser weight. Similarly, the weighting of a system as significant as a national or our global system, which we exist within, is far greater still. So, the proximity that we conceive of is subjective, but the weighting of a system is more objective (but not entirely).

This, according to constructionism, is how we conceive of the good on a systems level. Consisting of virtuous individuals, systems, and interplay, in addition to managing the different systems that we live in.

Now we have outlined what is good on the systems level; I will endeavour to explain why this is good for both the system and the individual agents. This system serves to provide a structure and environment which is needed to foster flourishing individuals. The social system provides stability and security and helps provide for basic needs, all of which are necessary to be met in order for someone to grow. The social system also provides for the individuals' psychological need for social interaction and integration/belonging. Another benefit of the social system is the ability to learn from others so that we have more than what only we know. We may share in the knowledge of many others and benefit from this and learn better ways to live and act. Learning in this way allows for the sharing of knowledge and potential to further build and flourish. This provides a foundation upon which we may construct ourselves. Thus, the good for

the system is an extension of both its function and how/why it is good for those individual agents involved in the system.

““The conception of the polis, then, is that of an institutionalized social organization designed to afford maximum realization of values by individuals, as well as optimal utilization of the values realized” (Norton, 1991, p14). In this Aristotelian view, every individual actualizes virtues in self with the support necessary from friends, associates, and the society as a whole.” (Narvaez, 2005, Norton, 1991)

This is the essence of eudaimonia (flourishing). We have to look at people in relation to their systems as we form ‘networks of interdependency’ (Malcolm, 2009). So, the social system is ‘good’ insofar as it is necessary for our flourishing and cultivation of virtuous people and interactions as it provides a social environment, stability, security, and the potential for genuine progress. Once people have a stable base where they are less concerned for basic needs, and they are provided with an environment and the tools to build themselves and that which is around them, then they may begin to construct. The system is how this is provided, and that is why it is the necessary second layer in this theoretical structure and why it is part of the good.

So, how do we achieve this? A human social system is not static but a living, changing, and growing system. The system must respond to changes both from its external environment (and other systems) and from within the system (throughput and feedback) - flexibility and room for progress are needed. Thus, there must be a structure in place which outlines the way people live, and this can be enforced to protect the integrity and security of the system. However, this must be subject to

revision, analysis, and development, i.e., in the structure of the cycle of paradigm shifts. So, we must now analyse what is needed for the system to function in the manner we have outlined in this essay and flourish. The social system must fit both its people and environment and ought to be an extension of the virtues shown on an individual level, applied on a far greater scale. This is where useful principles such as universalisation and utility calculus and simple practical and theoretical wisdom must come into play with applying this ethic. One can measure its value by how it affects those both within and outside of the group, whether its approach is from principle and virtue, and whether it will result in positive ends conducive to flourishing.

The social contract allows for the adoption of a basic proto-ethical guideline that provides consistency, security, and stability. These can be actions agreed upon that either cultivate or vitiate the functioning or flourishing of the individuals and the system. The social contract also provides individuals with rights and protections and ensures that some basic needs are met. This is the first essential macrosystem in our social system - the policies that instruct how we must act (until this is changed and improved through social change processes). The implementation of the social contract is significant as it shapes to a considerable extent how individuals interact and operate within the system, and it provides the necessary security and support in the implementation of rights.

An unfortunate issue with the laws/contracts that has arisen is that our social systems have grown and developed into a completely different thing in relatively recent history. Of course, as we have developed our technologies and our populations have grown, the contract has had to account for more and more which did not exist even 50 years ago. Hence, the contract has become increasingly complex, which may risk drifting further

from its original function and losing sight of its purpose. (This deserves far more detail; however, I am unable to go into detail about everything).

An extension of this macrosystem is the justice system - which is responsible for maintaining, developing, and enforcing this. As the social contract functions to serve the flourishing of both the individuals and the system, there must be methods of dealing with those who transgress it. I will expand on this idea in the block on 'Getting it Wrong'.

Another system that must be effectuated is some sort of education system, where people learn and develop themselves by sharing knowledge and the training of an individual. This education should equip individuals with the tools necessary to thrive in the system. The education system is essential if the system is to function well and to flourish further and build. It is important to note that education should be a lifelong process, that people should be able to continue building and learning throughout their time. However, it is not clear to me how this is best achieved. I will elaborate on some aspects of education relevant to ethical/moral and character education in a separate chapter.

Of course, as the constituents of the order below determine the system, our systems are determined by us. So, given that we are imperfect ourselves, it is almost inevitable that our systems will be the same. This is not an issue - the system doesn't have to be perfect, only perfect *for us, according to us* - by which I mean those who the system affects (both in-group and outside of the group).

Again, I must emphasise how much we do not know about the social system - and I certainly do not know what a perfect and wholly flourishing social system might look like (or at least a system that is perfect for us). It is no shame to admit this, as we are all still learning and growing our knowledge. That is a salient point of this theory - that we

must do the best with what we know and improve as we learn new things. Of course, the social system must consider many factors, including but not limited to the environment, in-group and out-group relations and interactions and impacts, individual constituents who play various roles and may have different needs. We must also consider the possibility of our being wrong about our needs, leaving room for further development. As I have already said, this is a living system. These are just some of the elements necessary to provide a system within which individuals may build flourishing lives. Of course, there are many other macrosystems present in a social system. However, I must focus on those relevant to this endeavour. It is this learning and consideration that allows us to continue building our social systems and improving them.

So, the good on a systems level is a combination of the implementation and development of 'good' macrosystems, which shape the functioning of the social system, and producing virtuous and flourishing individual agents, which are its constituents. The system serves the individuals by meeting needs and providing the building blocks for the individuals to construct their lives and the system. Good people will build good systems, and good systems will produce good people, who in turn will develop the systems.

Block 5: MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

It is clear that any ethical theory worth its salt must take into account the various facts of how morally relevant processes occur within human psychology - the mental processes of making moral decisions and living a good life. Such psychological processes are both conscious and unconscious, involving our emotions, intuitions, reasoning, and more complex concepts such as our identity and self-concept. Research has shown that emotions are essential for decision making (Lerner et al, 2014)

and the importance of emotional motivations (e-motivations for short; Roseman, 2001) is prominent in both moral philosophy and psychology. Or as is put here:

“Based on modern psychological theorizing that suggests that emotions perform a key role in human functioning (Lazarus, 1991; Scherer et al., 2001; van Zomeren et al., 2012), emotion is conceptualized as a dynamic psychological mechanism that guides individuals’ efforts to cope with their environment (Lazarus, 1991).” (van Zomeren, 2013)

Below I will very briefly outline a constructionist modelling of morally relevant psychology.

A much more detailed analysis of most of the ‘moral’ emotions discussed herein may be found in Haidt (2003) *The Moral Emotions* and Gibbs (2019) *Moral development and reality*. I would strongly recommend these texts for a much more effective explanation.

Quasi-Moral Emotions

What some call moral emotions are really social, morally relevant emotions - they themselves are not ‘moral’. These can, for the most part, fit into five rough groups:

Other-condemning emotions, other-elevating emotions, self-condemning emotions,

self-elevating emotions, and identifying emotions. The condemning emotions serve a role in creating an affective aversive reaction to antisocial behaviours, and the elevating emotions serve the purpose of encouraging pro-social behaviour. The 'Identifying' quasi-emotions serve a role in motivating prosociality in themselves as they form a relationship between the self and the other. Emotions are an integral part of our moral life and how we decide on and perform actions. In order to understand morality, we must understand moral agents, and human moral agents are largely driven by emotion.

Identifying 'Emotions'

The first, and in my opinion, the most crucial group I will address is what I term the 'identifying' emotions. These are not pure emotions per se, as they also involve some semblance of cognition (Singer & Lamm, 2009), as they allow us to recognise others as living, thinking, feeling, valuable beings. Such emotions include empathy/sympathy and compassion. The purpose of these emotions is to encourage a non-egocentric approach - the recognition and consideration of others in our actions. If we identify with others and recognise them as worthy of a basic level of respect, then we can work with others for mutual benefit. In Game Theory, this is to shift from participating in a zero-sum game where one wins, the other loses an equal amount to balance the score to a non-zero-sum game where both may win. In constructionism, this forms the beginnings of the systems ethic - the understanding that we should work in such a way that benefits all. Empathy or sympathy has a complex history as an 'emotion' (Haidt, 2003; Lishner, Baston & Huss, 2011). There is even disagreement regarding whether or not it is, in fact, an emotion (Lishner, Batson & Huss, 2011). However, I will not address this here, as I am

simply concerned about its function in causing a feeling of identification between the self and the other and motivating altruistic (or at least prosocial) behaviours (Hoffman, 2001; Decety & Cowell, 2015; Batson, 2011; Singer & Lamm, 2009; Lamm & Majdandzic, 2015). When one feels empathy with another person, it is at once a recognition of some similarity between oneself and the other and recognising their state of being. Sympathy comes in when we begin 'feeling' what the other may be experiencing. This recognition and feeling of similarity form the basis for many of the other emotions, as they are prosocial. This is the foundation of being a social being.

“For instance, with respect to “cognitive empathy”, distinguishing affective perspective-taking (i.e., perspective taking to understand affect) from cognitive perspective taking (perspective-taking to understand cognition) seems much cleaner and more parsimonious than calling the former “empathy” and the latter “theory of mind.” (Lamm & Majdandzic, 2015)

“To complicate things, within the latter concept, another distinction to be made is the one between empathy in the sense of “feeling as” another person (i.e. representing her feelings as if they were our own), and “feeling for” her, which is an empathic (concern) response more akin to concepts such as sympathy, compassion, or care for the other (see [Batson, 2011](#), [Singer and Lamm, 2009](#) for a differentiation between these terms).” (Lamm & Majdandzic, 2015)

All of these different terms describe essentially the same function in identifying another moral agent and forming the basis for social connection. This is so deeply ingrained in us that the simple fact of existence and function of mirror neurons and shared

activation seem to substantiate the claim that we are functionally wired for sociality and empathy (Iacoboni, 2009; Lamm & Majdandzic, 2015, Braten, 2007). Mirror neurons are stimulated both when we go through with an action and when we identify another as going through that same thing. However, we must not move too quickly in drawing conclusions from this neural phenomenon:

“Summing up, the empirical phenomenon of shared neural activations during direct and vicarious emotion experiences is a very clear and robust one. What is much less clear is its functional interpretation, with conceptual issues and methodological and empirical limitations obstructing a clearer view.” (Cook, Bird, Catmur, Press & Heyes, 2014)

Whilst the support for the proposition that mirror neurons and activations underlie empathy is dubious due to issues of precision and causation. A conclusion that is very simple to draw which does not rely on these, is that the simple fact that we have these suggests the importance of this characteristic of empathy to our functioning as human beings that there are built-in functions for empathy. This ability to recognise others socially and identify ‘sameness’ is conducive to both learning from others and social behaviour.

These lead to another identifying emotion - when an agent identifies another who is suffering, compassion. Compassion is elicited when another whom we relate to is suffering, and we are often motivated to act in such a way to alleviate

this suffering. Compassion moves us emotionally as we feel emotions congruent with the suffering other, feeling both distress and concern for the other.

Other-condemning emotions

These emotions are negative, aversive emotions that arise when someone acts in such a way that vitiates the security of the group or negatively affects the flourishing of an individual or the group or breaches the social contract/social norms (this last one is not always a bad thing; however, it can be a cause for these emotions). Emotions in this group include (righteous) anger, disgust, contempt, and others. These function to discourage these behaviours that may damage the function and flourishing of the group. Anger arises from the perception of damage to something associated with the self, whether this be the group one associates with, their friends or family, or more simply, themselves. Disgust, in a moral sense, is similar to that of when consuming food. By this, I mean it appears to be a reaction to an action/person who is unhealthy and repulsive - a reaction to something that is the opposite of flourishing. (Haidt, 2003)

Self-condemning emotions

Self-condemning emotions are elicited when one engages in antisocial behaviour, and this has an aversive effect. These may involve embarrassment, shame, and guilt. These serve as motivators for one not to engage in such anti-social, abnormal behaviours as it

negatively conditions us. These serve as reminders of a lack of virtue in our actions (Haidt, 2003).

Other-praising emotions

These emotions are prescriptive in that they function to recognise things that positively contribute to flourishing and elevate it to be seen as something to aspire to and to follow as an example. These are emotive recognition of perceived virtue. When one witnesses an act of bravery, such as someone saving another from a burning building, then those who witness this demonstration of virtue feel emotions such as awe. A very different emotion in this family is gratitude. Gratitude is when one feels that they owe a debt to the other for an action or service that they have performed. The agent (the debtor) is then motivated to 'pay back' their debt and act pro-socially towards the debtee. (Haidt, 2003; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons & Larson, 2001)

Self-praising emotions

Self-praising emotions are elicited when one perceives that they have done well - i.e. expressed virtue or performed an action that reflects well on their self-concept. These emotions include pride and joy. (Haidt, 2003)

Identity

Building the self-concept necessary for a fully flourishing individual is a lengthy process and requires constant attention. One has a concept of identity from an early age, but it is not paid attention to, or much developed. Even many adults lack a consistent, coherent, and accurate self-concept or identity. For the most part, people simply do not know themselves enough and do not pay sufficient attention to the 'story' they tell themselves about themselves. This is a criticism of virtue ethics - as people seem to lack a consistent character (Alfano, 2013). To respond to this, it can be explained that people simply lack the virtuous character to a sufficient extent that it is consistent. This, in addition to the lack of an internalised and accepted identity that one is an agent that acts in such a way - this is almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. When an agent identifies as something like a 'brave' person and practices the virtue of courage, they will become this person and act according to this self-image. Thus, we must continuously build and maintain a narrative of ourselves as such a moral character and be consistent with this throughout our lives. We all want to be the hero of our own story. I say it is not enough to believe in this character but to be consistent with this idea - we must be an expert in ourselves and recognise when we are not acting consistently with being a virtuous agent. Thus, we build our narrative as identifying with being a good, flourishing moral agent.

Intuitions

Intuitions, as I understand them, can come in a few ways but have consistent characteristics of being automatic, pre-conscious or unconscious, and we feel deeply

attached to these intuitive thoughts/beliefs/feelings. It is vital to note that intuitions do not come *ex nihilo*; they have deep roots in our psychology. Intuitions are based on essentially the sum of our prior experiences - our learning, upbringing, training and conditioning, our ideological environment, and assumptions, and more. These are rooted in who we are. Separate from the moral theory of intuitionism, constructionism understands intuitions in line with the psychological account - as non- or pre-conscious 'knowledge' without effortful deliberation or cognition; feelings, beliefs or desires rooted in our psychology. Thus, they are handy guessing tools as a result of their automaticity and their broad basis. However, they are very prone to be based on things that we have no control over, fallacies, bias and other problematic processes. In short, they can be unreliable. We must be aware of how we build our intuitions, that they are based on the right things and not faulty thinking, and we need to be able to challenge and analyse them. They are powerful tools in ethical situations in which we may not be able to think at length and require snap decisions, and so we should use them and cultivate them, but in the right ways. There is a vast difference between an expert intuition and an uninformed intuition. If these intuitions are based on the character of a virtuous person who is aware of their faults and biases and are reliably rooted in true beliefs and good processes, then they are better than when they are not. I have previously used the analogy of a sports player - many sports are played at such a speed that it does not leave time for prior thought in the moment but relies on the intuitive expertise of the player to make the right move. These intuitive moves are based on what they have learned and practised over many hours in their sport. Again, the same applies to a moral agent in similar situations.

Reasoning

Moral reasoning processes have been covered to death almost, so I will briefly outline some useful tools to have in one's mental toolbox. The main tools I will address are critical thinking and what I call the 4 P's: Prohairesis (right decision making), Principles (tools/processes to think about actions), Phronesis (practical wisdom, and Praxis (application and physically carrying out of the thought and decision-making process). Critical thinking is an essential life skill, especially here where we must deliberate on our situation, the information available, the different options available to carry out, and what strengths and weaknesses in all of the above. Prohairesis is the ability to choose the correct path - if we see our possibilities yet cannot decide, then it is a useless exercise. Decision making is an actual skill, to be able to identify options and choose one and then apply oneself to it is not always easy. Principles are practical methods to analyse actions and situations. Examples of these include things such as the utility calculus or things such as Kant's universalisation principle and the mere means principle to see whether or not our actions are consistent with others and if they are well-grounded. These allow us to rationalise and sometimes even quantify aspects of our situation. These, in addition to reflection on the grounding of our options in virtues (use of the doctrine of the mean), are useful thinking tools in evaluating our choices. Phronesis is the ability to understand these, be attuned to moral decision making, situations, and factors - it is to be wise to what matters and how things work. This essentially collates the above, including awareness of one's psychological processes, virtues, role, the concept of flourishing, and how it is expressed. The final reasoning method is praxis - this is how we use the others in practice and apply it to actions and the world.

Bringing these together

As outlined above, reasoning and emotion are necessarily tied together. These emotions motivate action, and the reasoning processes guide it. It is necessary to understand these mental phenomena as they are the basis for our moral thought and decision making – the foundation of how we begin to act morally. We need each of these emotional groups to act as very primitive evaluating mechanisms to produce a more tangible and visceral dimension to our moral phenomenology. We need the reasoning and cognitive processes to balance and mediate these, in order to make them truly useful and to channel them into action.

Expertise

Expertise is straightforward to explain but less so to achieve. Expertise is the development and use of all of these skills, the attunement to our emotive reactions and understanding of them, and the use in an informed and functional manner. This simply requires a lengthy learning process, and constant practice to refine. When one is competent or an expert, these processes are more automatic and are better understood and applied. This is a flourishing moral psychology that is well rounded, built and maintained.

Block 6: CULTIVATING MORALITY

We have already outlined the features of what a moral expert is and how they act. We must consider how we build a moral expert and how this can be applied and integrated into our education system. This theory of constructionism is predicated on our building of theory, knowledge, people, and systems. So, in this block we will address how we begin to build flourishing expert moral agents. We have qualified people teaching our children maths, science, and languages. Still, no one explicitly teaches how to be a good person, act in their social system, think critically about our situations and our actions or responses. This education/training must also be tailored to the development of our capabilities and capacities throughout life - meeting our needs and ensuring optimal development and learning synchronously. Now, from how I see this issue, we have two options. Option 1 is the integrative ethical education route (Narvaez, 2006), where the advantage is taken of morally 'pregnant' material in topics already taught (Starratt, 2005), such as history and literature. This would mean using these subjects to teach about ethics and provide a moral/character education. Option 2 is to add moral education to the curriculum as a separate subject. I will refer extensively here to work by Darcia Narvaez, as her work on moral and character education is extensive, research-guided, and, to put simply, really good.

“The integrative education model (IEE; Narvaez, 2006, 2007) provides an intentional, holistic, comprehensive, empirically-derived approach to moral character development. It is informed deeply by both ancient philosophy and current science about what contributes to human flourishing. As Aristotle pointed out, human flourishing

necessarily includes individuals and communities, a perspective corroborated by the biological and social sciences. No one survives or flourishes alone. In fact, humans are biologically wired for sociality and love (Maturana & Verden-Zoller, 1996). With the proper care, humans are deeply empathic, with ethics of high engagement and imagination” (Narvaez, 2013, 2014).

However, I believe that this is insufficient for real expertise, as I feel more is needed to learn about morality than the analysis of other events. Other skills previously outlined, such as psychological skills, i.e. thinking and emotional understanding, the practice of these skills, and much more. There is so much to learn about being a flourishing moral agent and how to behave and operate in a social system. This need means that merely tacking a moral education onto other subjects which are (supposedly) complete on their own does not allow for coverage of what is necessary to build competence. Narvaez (2006) herself admits that:

“Educators themselves bring up a pragmatic issue. How can they teach values when they are struggling to deliver on academics—basic knowledge in science, literacy, critical thinking?”

But continues by proffering a solution:

“Of course, the same quick answer applies: schools are already teaching values, whether they want to or not, intentionally or not. There is no need to add a new course. The solution advocated here is well expressed by Starratt (1994): Rather than add on new courses in ethics, teachers can make use of an abundance of ethically pregnant material

already in the curriculum that has not been attended to. It is not a question of working longer hours; it is a question of working smarter, of improving the quality of all the human interactions now taking place in the normal school day. (pp. 11-12)”

In my eyes, this is unnecessary and trying to integrate a complete moral education into other academic subjects will not meet our needs. I believe this because, as someone who has still only recently come through the western education system, I know that I did not perceive any such moral education.

A solution I would prefer is to add an area of education dedicated to living as an agent in a system to the syllabus. This could encompass not only moral and character education but also comprehensive teaching of many issues one faces in life and how to function as a member of society. This ‘subject’ may range from financial education, education about social relationships, macrosystems functioning - (how to operate within them and how they work), psychological awareness, professional areas, and much more. These are all issues that are not genuinely covered in our education and desperately need updating. These topics are often expected to be left to a child’s parents to teach - who may have no competency themselves. To flourish, we must first know how to function - and these topics, in addition to the development of a moral character, are important in one’s performance in the social system. These issues’ significance means that this is no longer only one topic that needs to be ‘integrated’ into other subjects, but multiple. Therefore, it is clear that this needs to be an entirely new subject added to our educational curriculum.

The development of our education system to centre around graded exams has narrowed our learning practices for the most part down to thinking and memorising - only two functions of many. This over-emphasis has drawn away from the genuine

understanding of topics and growing expertise to mere recall and use of concepts and facts. This is especially dangerous when applied to moral education - so we must shift the aims and focus of our education squarely back on expertise. Otherwise - if one has simply memorised the 'answers' in their moral education, what is there of a genuine expert moral agent?

How, then, is this moral education to be achieved? At the earliest stages of development, it is important not to overstress the brain with things such as academic study. Therefore, a more carefree and basic approach may be needed. This may be incorporated into things such as play and stories - where moral exemplars can be introduced. Another intriguing idea is building nurseries and care homes together so that people with long life experience can enjoy contact with young people, and the young may learn from the more experienced and learn about caring for people. Building such a system would open the potential to form attachments in a sort of mentor/mentee relationship (almost ancient Greek style). Meaningful emotional connections and attachments are essential for people to be interdependent (Boyd & Richerson, 2006). These attachments also work to develop morally relevant emotions such as care, empathy, and others such as shame and guilt to become more virtuous and to contribute more to others in society (more in the chapter on moral psychology). It is largely through these attachments that we learn morality, as they are very close models, and we interact with our attachment figures regularly. This early start is vital to almost 'condition' ethics and character into people, as, at such an early age, people are malleable and absorb information quickly.

As cognitive abilities develop, so too can their moral education, gradually involving more theoretical and practical methods of expressing knowledge, competence, and virtue. Elite athletes, musicians, or any performers often begin training at an early age

and put many hours of practice in, even if they only practice the basics initially. I see no reason why this should not also be applicable to the training of a moral character. These methods of education can be procedurally developed over time to practice more complex things such as thought experiments, principles, and further application as the agent becomes more involved in the social system.

“Thus, cultivating virtue requires shaping not only behavior but also perceptions and desires in developmentally appropriate ways. Initial guidance from parents and teachers involves coaxing desires and motivation (perception and sensibilities) as well as reactions and responsive behaviors (habitual responses). Gradually, the individual takes on the shaping of these responses in the self. Character development becomes autopoietic or self-organizing (Maturana & Varela, 1980).” (Narvaez, 2005)

As the agent and their education both progress, more freedom can be given to the agent to form their own moral identity and adapt what they have learned into their life and role in the system. This enables the agents to reflect on what they have learned, develop it further and challenge it if they see a superior method. Once we have provided these tools and competencies, the agent can build themselves and their life into a flourishing state. As Aristotle outlined in his skill analogy thousands of years ago in his ethics, the student must become autonomous and almost their own teacher in order to be considered an expert.

Moral education does not finish once it is ‘learned’. As with expertise in any subject, it ought to be continuously tested, updated, and exercised. The concepts described above should be applied throughout life, and of course, when one becomes a moral expert, they can help teach others and raise them up also.

(It is important to note that those who teach should also be competent themselves. We only allow those with qualifications and expertise to teach academic subjects such as history and geography, so this should also be the same for ethics (how this ought to be measured and achieved is beyond the scope of this project but would be an interesting topic of future research).)

So, the basic building blocks of a moral education involve the use of models in the form of moral exemplars/experts, a progressively developing curriculum that the teaching of both skills and concepts involved in what is needed to become morally competent/build expertise (these are outlined in the section on the individual) and involves practical applications of the concepts taught/learned. The 'curriculum' ought to be tailored to what we know of developmental psychology and biology, so we stimulate this development and not hinder it (again, far beyond the scope of this project, I am sure others may address this). These provide our moral agents with what they need to flourish.

Block 7: EXPLAINING DIFFERENCES: THE NON- ISSUE OF RELATIVISM

Some argue that because we can observe a vast variation in moral beliefs and systems across cultures and times, that morality itself is simply relative to the social group it arises in. Therefore, such people argue that morality is merely a substitute term for social norms and personally/socially approved behaviours. This draws conclusions about moral nihilism, subjectivism and relativism from the observation of differences and disagreements. My response to these arguments can be summed up in this way, “well, yes, but really no.” I am discussing this issue at more length as I believe if left unaddressed it presents a greater issue to the basis and functioning of this theory than some other issues in metatheory.

This is so close to the right answer, but it draws ultimately the wrong conclusions from this observation. As I have argued, the social system and contract are socially constructed, but there are reasons behind this and its functions. The foundation and theoretical basis of this social construction are in the universal objective fact of flourishing - which is not itself relative.

The idea that observed differences and changes in moral beliefs serve as a basis for an argument that all morality is relative. Therefore, there can be no valid disagreement over morality is - to put simply - absurd. To refuse to disagree on ethical matters is to undermine the entire project of ethics itself - if there is no ought not, then what is ought? If there is no better or worse, then why do we think about value? If nothing is wrong, then what is right? This is a cop-out, or as Williams (1985) more dramatically put is, “the anthropologist’s heresy”. Thus, in this section, I will argue why the observation of differences is an issue of the agents, not morality itself. In fact, it is irrelevant when morality is so defined as in this structure I have presented.

Our ethics have their foundations built on our best knowledge of ourselves and the world around us and how best to live in our world. So, it should be no surprise that

people of different cultures and different times have not got the same beliefs about themselves and the world - because they effectively live in other worlds. As individual agents and systems, we are continually growing and developing and learning and changing, and thus our ethics are changing as well. When we see our ethics as an extension of ourselves rather than something outside of us, it is easy to realise that it is not an irregularity at all; it is simply a result of differences that have arisen. However, this does not mean that everyone is right; this simply means that we are all striving for the same thing, in different ways, that can still be better or worse methods. Various methods may be used for different needs, as long as they are serving the same purpose and not going against the ends of flourishing. I will explain differences in this way, as simply as I can: As I have already argued, morality is man-made and abstract, but it is based upon the natural objective fact of human flourishing (which itself can be multiply realisable). We can (and have) changed our minds about natural physical facts as our knowledge of them grows. Simply look at how scientific beliefs and paradigms have developed over time. Whilst different methods (i.e. social norms/contracts providing a moral system in which to operate) may function, they can still be measured on the fact of how they are flourishing or not. Thus, whilst the descriptive observation of the fact that morality has differed and changed between cultures and over time is accurate, this does not mean that morality itself is relative. Here, we must separate ourselves and our abstract beliefs about ethics from the objective value of morality or 'true morality'. Our social systems and macrosystems e.g. social contract is socially intersubjective, hence the pointing out by proponents of relativism that it is reducible to 'socially approved behaviour'. However, the relativists view cannot account for moral progress or social change in response to new learning. If morality is socially approved behaviour, then anything abnormal is against this, and so there is no reason for the social system to

change and adapt. If anything is socially abnormal and it is discouraged, or if something is normal and approved, then there seems no basis to change the perception of these behaviours. Given this, and the fact that we have changed our perception of previously socially disapproved behaviours, e.g. homosexuality and socially approved behaviours, e.g. slavery, this suggests that there is a reason why things are socially approved or disapproved of, and we do change things according to our knowledge and learning. This change in beliefs and behaviours suggests then that there is an objective measure rather than just social acceptance/approval or disapproval. But why would these change if there was not something that made them objectively wrong? Benedict (1934) states that each society develops on its own inevitable course:

“In so far as a civilization is well integrated and consistent within itself, it will tend to carry farther and farther, according to its nature, its initial impulse toward a particular type of action...”

Benedict continues to deny the possibility of social change throughout her (1934) paper:

“In a society that values trance, as in India, they will have supernormal experience. In a society that institutionalizes homosexuality, they will be homosexual. In a society that sets the gathering of possessions as the chief human objective, they will amass property. The deviants, whatever the type of behavior the culture has institutionalized, will remain few in number.”

It seems that Benedict is accepting one observation that social systems have different beliefs about some practices, and ignoring the glaring fact that they can and do change their beliefs about things considered objective such as science. This is also put forward by other proponents of relativism such as Kawall (2005):

“We need some explanation of why moral facts that simply (and without explanation) obtain in a world are to be seen as worthy of following rather than any rival ethical systems”.

They are both correct in their observation of variety in ethical systems. However, just because our abstract systems of morality are varied, this does not mean that the values of morality itself vary. Simply because we say something or present a theory or a choice does not mean it is a right or valid choice to follow. Kawall (2005) offers the comparison to physical laws; we cannot ‘opt-out’ of physical facts – but neglects to mention our history of doing just that. We have changed our minds about physical facts many times – still today, there are people who believe that the earth is flat or that gravity doesn’t exist, are they right? I would say likely not, but there is still a choice, and they are not both equally valid choices. A response to these is well put by Harris (2010):

“The concept of “well-being”, like the concept of “health”, is truly open for revision and discovery. Just how fulfilled is it possible for us to be, personally and collectively? What are the conditions – ranging from changes in the genome to changes in economic systems – that will produce such happiness? We simply do not know.”

And further elaborated here:

“I wonder if there is anyone on earth who would be tempted to attack the philosophical underpinnings of medicine with questions like: “what about all the people who don’t share your goal of avoiding disease and early death? Who is to say living a long life free of pain and debilitating illness is ‘healthy’? What makes you think that you can convince a person suffering from fatal gangrene that he is not as healthy as you are?” and yet

these are precisely the kinds of objections I face when I speak about morality in terms of human and animal well-being... One of my critics put the concern this way. "Morals are relative to the time and place in which they appear. If you do not already accept well-being as a value, then there seems no argument for why one should promote well-being."... despite 150 years of working at it, we still can't convince a majority of Americans that evolution is a fact. Does this mean biology isn't a proper science?"

It is bafflingly easy to observe that there are many concepts that we ascribe to which involve different methods to reach the same objective goal - take a recipe, for example. Different recipes may all attempt to make the same meal but have slightly different ingredients or methods. There are certainly objectively better and worse recipes, even though the concept of the meal is itself abstractly constructed. These can all be measured against the idea of a perfect meal, and regardless of whether or not we know how to cook the perfect meal, we know how to measure it. Thus we can decide on which recipes are better or worse at achieving this end goal and judge the virtues of the cooking. Similar to any human rules we have constructed, such as the rules of language and grammar for one - we can still say one is misusing language when it is grammatically incorrect or if it is gibberish, that makes no sense.

Back to the topic at hand, if we use the measure of human and systems flourishing as I have suggested, then we have a substantial and objective reason to choose one ethical system over another. The reason why relativism exists is that we haven't yet found this perfect social system or theory - it would be difficult to disagree with this, though I am sure people would find a way. Again, this invokes the separation between the objective truths (that our ethics is based upon) and our epistemological attitudes towards ethics, i.e., our moral beliefs and dispositions. Once we narrow the separation between the two, we will inevitably narrow the gaps in our disagreements. We see this in all sciences,

particularly human sciences which are inherently difficult as humans are challenging to study - we are unreliable. But no one would say that air did not exist simply because we could not see it or understand it - it took thousands of years to understand the components and properties of air and how the common phenomenon of wind occurs. There have been many various explanations, but on review, they were not all equal. The metaphysical position of relativism then, springing from the observations of descriptive relativism, is comparable to the position of flat-earthers, who observe that the world is flat with their own equally reliable eyes as those of experts. So, I will conclude that - much like the scientists and flat-earthers or gravity-deniers that I have mentioned - Relativism does not pose an actual critique or threat to the existence of moral values, particularly in this theory.

Block 8: GETTING IT WRONG

This final section itself is more a question or a challenge - for us to apply this understanding of morality to how we approach those who get this wrong. A theory of the good should understand how a moral system approaches those who are not so moral. Those who violate the social contract (law) or ethical behaviour may do so for a number of reasons and can do so in infinitely different ways. So, it is a huge task to address precisely how one should approach those who do immoral things. One size simply cannot fit all. As I am no expert on these matters, I can simply use what I have to ask questions and make suggestions for directions rather than provide destinations and

answers. So, we will apply the theory discussed herein to consider how we deal with this issue in general. This will focus on three main parts. Firstly, the application and enforcement of law/contracts, secondly, the virtue of the application, and finally, the ends produced by the punishment.

Constructionism focusses on building flourishing individuals and systems. So, should someone act in such a way that they compromise the stability, security, and functioning of the social group then there must be a method of dealing with this in line with the theory. On the one hand, there is an emphasis on moral education and the importance of being able to have the tools available to build a good life. Someone may perform such an illegal and immoral act as a result of a lack in this area and as such perhaps this could fix the issue. Whether the action stems from ignorance, vice, or perceived 'no other option', it could be better for both the system and the offending individual to show a better method and meet their needs. However, the system itself needs to be protected from those who would damage it. Thus, we must understand both the direction and origin of the approaches from both the system and the offending individual. The system ought to come from a position of virtue and aim to find the best outcome for both the system and the individual. The individual must be understood in terms of who they are and their situation - this determines how the system approaches them. The social contract or law functions to provide security for the individuals in the system. If it is shown not to provide this security in being overly permissive and lenient, it fails in its function. However, the system must also attempt to restore the social system to its original position to rectify the damage as possible. This includes the offending individual - if it is possible to return them to the system as a virtuous individual exerting a positive influence, then this is preferable. This is a delicate and challenging balance to strike -

and of course, we have to understand we live and function under less than ideal conditions and, again, subject to human error. The justice macrosystem must be designed to strike this balance and built to serve the social system as an integral part rather than a completely separate entity. This leads us to the concept of the stakeholder society. This idea is that each individual agent in the social system or community has a “significant stake” in its functioning (Brooks, 2020). This means that everyone has skin in the game and ought to be invested in their systems. The justice macrosystem is intended to protect and serve these people, so it makes sense that these people should play a part.

In legal theory, there are five main aims of punishment: Deterrence, Incapacitation, Retribution, Rehabilitation, and Restitution (Dubber, 2015). Deterrence aims at discouraging the breaking of the social contract and de-motivating people from repeating such actions. This serves to protect the system from further damage by prevention. Incapacitation protects the system by rendering the offender unable to do further damage, usually by removing them from the system, e.g., custodial sentencing. Retribution is a more abstract concept; it is explained as the sense and appearance of justice being done. This gives the impression of settling the issue, that the offender has been punished. This is important in maintaining stability in the faith in the protections of the system and that then people do not seek to take justice into their own hands and out of the control of the system - to take personal revenge. Restitution is the paying back of the debt to society. Restitution is where one tries to remedy the offence and restore as far as possible the original situation and try to make up for any damage caused. Finally, Rehabilitation is where the justice macrosystem attempts to reform the offender and produce a positively contributing member of society rather than one who

damages it. This can take different forms, such as teaching practical professional skills, academic education, moral education, etc. This means that once the offender has been punished, they may successfully re-enter the social system and rebuild rather than fall back again.

Taking the directives of both this ethical theory and legal theory, I will discuss a few ideas and their application. The first of these is the unified theory of punishment as presented by Thom Brooks (2012, 2020); secondly, the practice of restorative justice, and finally, elaborating on the directive of rehabilitation and reformation.

The unified theory of punishment aims to combine these aims of punishment under new measurable directive criteria. Brooks (2012, 2020) places the establishment of guilt as the highest priority (of course), and then the rest follow below. The unified theory is a model that collates six features: Guilt, crime reduction, rehabilitation, restoration, and cost. These aim to show how different penal aims can coherently and consistently be brought together and applied under a new higher objective of crime reduction. Each feature is measurable according to Brooks, and this allows us to measure and analyse what practices work. Brooks views and conceives of crime reduction as a measure of rights being protected - in this case, fewer violations of rights (i.e. crimes) than better-protected citizens. Previously, in the west, it has been left to judges' discretion, which aims of punishment to focus on and draw on any they see fit. However, this is very much arbitrary and, again, subject to substantial human error and bias. I will just insert some quotes from his paper to clarify:

“The Model Penal Code’s approach – supporting several different principles in a single model – was reaffirmed in the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 creating the United States Sentencing Commission.⁴ The Act states: The court, in determining the particular sentence to impose, shall consider– (1) the nature and circumstances of the offense and the history and characteristics of the defendant; (2) the need for the sentence imposed– (A) to reflect the seriousness of the offense, to promote respect for the law, and to provide just punishment for the offense; (B) to afford adequate deterrence to criminal conduct; (C) to protect the public from further crimes of the defendant; and (D) to provide the defendant with needed educational or vocational training, medical care, or other correctional treatment in the most effective manner.”⁵ (Brooks, 2020)

“One of many illustrations is section 142 of the UK’s Criminal Justice Act 2003: Purposes of sentencing: (1) Any court dealing with an offender in respect of his offence must have regard to the following purposes of sentencing– (a) the punishment of offenders, (b) the reduction of crime (including its reduction by deterrence), (c) the reform and rehabilitation of offenders, (d) the protection of the public, and (e) the making of reparation by offenders to persons affected by their offence.”³ (Brooks, 2020)

So, these act more as vague guidelines to refer to when considering what to take into account, rather than any specific directive. Thus, to bring these aims together and create a better-informed directive theory of punishment, Brooks (2012) offers his unified theory which allows us to prioritise particular aims in a measurable way to test which approaches function to reduce crime empirically. With this theory, we can evaluate the efficacy of our justice system and be guided by what actually works. This significantly improves the structuring of judicial approaches as it is no longer

completely arbitrary. The implementation of this theory is straightforward also, as it does not necessarily change the aims of punishment but restructures them under new hierarchical directives. This provides a more effective directive for dealing with offenders in line with this theory.

Onto the second concept that I will address; restorative justice. I have chosen this approach to consider and proffer as a link to this theory as its concepts and aims are in line with a constructionist theory of systems flourishing and the building of good people and systems. Restorative justice is the practice of bringing offenders and those affected by the offence together in a productive manner. This can be between two individuals, and also, the community can get involved to discuss their issues and navigate a way to progress and plot a path to a remedy. Van Ness & Strong (2014) provide simple explanations in their introductory book on restorative justice and explain it in terms of three concepts: the encounter conception, reparative conception, and transformation conception (p42 (57 in pdf)). The encounter outlines the meeting of interested parties to consider issues in a relatively informal manner. The victim, the offender, and any interested parties are free to discuss the crime and its aftermath and come to terms with what has happened. The reparative conception is concerned with the harm caused by the crime both to the victim(s) and the social system as a whole. This conception aims to remedy those affected, including the victim(s), community, and in some cases, the offending party as well - trying to fix the issue caused (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2013). The transformation conception regards the relations at the systems level, the functioning of the system and how people interact in this environment. This seeks to

solve issues that act as barriers to well-functioning social relationships. They suggest defining restorative justice thusly:

“Restorative justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behavior. It is best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders.” (Van Ness & Strong, 2014)

Returning to the idea of a stakeholder society, This definition indicates a justice macrosystem that is more integrated into the social system of the community. In this way, they are involved in the maintenance of their social stability.

Van Ness and Strong (2014) outline the values and principles that underlie restorative justice:

“In addition, we propose 10 operational values to guide how restorative processes are managed:

1. Amends: Those responsible for the harm resulting from the offense are also responsible for repairing it to the extent possible.
2. Assistance: Affected parties are helped as needed in becoming contributing members of their communities in the aftermath of the offense.
3. Collaboration: Affected parties are invited to find solutions through mutual, consensual decision-making in the aftermath of the offense.

4. Empowerment: Affected parties have a genuine opportunity to participate in and effectively influence the response to the offense.
5. Encounter: Affected parties are given the opportunity to meet the other parties in a safe environment to discuss the offense, harms, and the appropriate responses.
6. Inclusion: Affected parties are invited to directly shape and engage in restorative processes.
7. Moral education: Community standards are reinforced as values and norms are considered in determining how to respond to particular offenses.
8. Protection: The parties' physical and emotional safety is primary.
9. Reintegration: The parties are given the means and opportunity to rejoin their communities as whole, contributing members.
10. Resolution: The issues surrounding the offense and its aftermath are addressed, and the people affected are supported, as completely as possible."

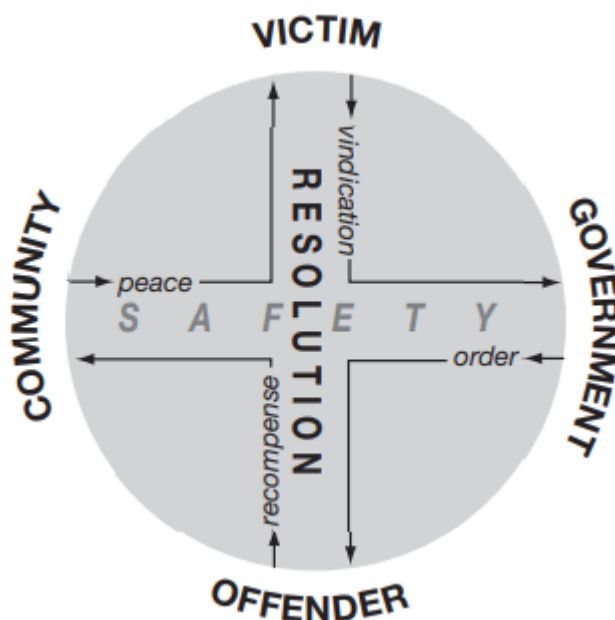
Again, borrowing from the same text, research appears to show strong support for the efficacy of restorative justice in vindication, retribution, restoration and importantly as prioritised by Brooks, crime reduction.

- “Crime victims who receive restorative justice do better, on average, than victims who do not, across a wide range of outcomes, including post-traumatic stress.
- In many tests, offenders who receive restorative justice commit fewer repeat crimes than offenders who do not. Recompense means the deserved obligation to pay for wrongfully causing an injury. The active party is the offender, and the purpose is to repair as fully as possible the injury caused by the wrongdoer. 54 RESTORING JUSTICE
- In no large-sample test has restorative justice increased repeat offending compared with criminal justice.
- Restorative justice reduces repeat offending more consistently with violent crimes than with less serious crimes.
- Diversion from prosecution to restorative justice substantially increases the odds of an offender being brought to justice.
- Restorative justice does not conflict with the rule of law, nor does it depart from the basic paradigm of the common law of crime.
- Restorative justice can do as well as, or better than, short prison sentences, as measured by repeat offending.

- Restorative justice reduces stated victim desire for violent revenge against offenders.

[(Sherman & Strang, 2007)]”

Given that this is an addition and adaptation to the current paradigm of western justice. It can only enhance and not detract from the current system. Furthermore, it emphasises the role of the community, which needs to be involved in and represented by the justice system. This is important for both the social system and the offender because it highlights the wrongdoing in more human, personal terms rather than by way of a disinterested system. Getting people more involved in the process of justice, in my eyes, can only be beneficial for the social system, as it provides a deeper understanding for all, of how the social system works and why the macrosystem structure is there.



This draws a contrast to the focus on punitive approaches and retribution:

“Retributive theory believes that pain will vindicate, but in practice, that is often counterproductive for both victim and offender. Restorative justice theory, on the other hand, argues that what truly vindicates is acknowledgement of victims’ harms and needs, combined with an active effort to encourage offenders to take responsibility, make right the wrongs, and address the causes of their behaviour. By addressing this need for vindication in a positive way, restorative justice has the potential to affirm both victim and offender and to help them transform their lives.” (Van Ness & Strong, 2014)

Rather than taking this counterproductive stance that is simply inflicting suffering on an offender, this offers a chance at improving the situation and everyone involved.

This is only the briefest overview and introduction to the concept, which is widely discussed in the circles of legal theory and philosophy. There are systemic adoptions of this approach around the globe. So, the question that remains is simply what the best way of integrating this approach with the traditional criminal justice/punitive approach is and how we achieve this.

Constructionism is a theory about building good. This includes building good people and social systems but also rebuilding those people and systems who do not meet this standard. Therefore, in order to build a good social system, we must allow for the rebuilding of people who are part of the society who have wronged it. There is no point in punishing someone if there is no benefit to the social system at the end of it. So, we want to reform those who have negatively affected the social system into people who positively contribute to it. With this, we can look back at the chapter on moral education and also understand the offender and their situation - why they did wrong in

the first place. Once the issue is understood, we should aim to resolve it and put the offender in a good position to re-enter society and rebuild their lives in a better way. If someone cannot function in the social system, how can we expect them to flourish? We must then look at socio-economic factors, psychological factors, situational factors in addition to moral factors. The complexity of these factors and the social contract/law is vast, and it is not an easy problem to approach - much easier said than done. But this is a theory about virtue and flourishing, which means that I have to argue idealistically to transform vice, ignorance, or whatever issue led to the offence into virtue, competence and flourishing; these are the ends that we aim to achieve. With this reconstruction, we must provide the means and the motivation to be a good citizen and person. The means that I speak of include a stable base - which should already be there from the system, the abilities discussed in chapters of the individual and moral education - to be morally and psychologically competent. The motivation to be good may come from a few sources, including understanding the good, welfare motivations and also the deterrent quality of the justice system. Thus, when the offender has been punished, and ideally, restorative processes have been carried out, they may return as a better person and become more than they were.

In conclusion, I am raising a challenge in the line of my theory to improve our justice system practices in order to better serve the flourishing of the system. This includes using a sort of unified theory and adapting our aims of justice to a more systematic and measured approach so we may see how to build further. The use of restorative processes and the integration of the community into the justice system to ensure the justice system serves the people as best it can (in lines with the measurable aims of the unified theory), and the effort made to rehabilitate those who commit offences against

the system seeks both to reduce crime and improve the functioning of the systems and individuals affected.

Block 9: DISCUSSING THE THEORY OF CONSTRUCTIONISM

This block seeks to engage in the theoretical side of the constructionism theory and position. I will elucidate how constructionism is intended to work as a theory and where it sits in relation to metaethical positions.

I will begin by suggesting my approach to Hume's very clear separation of cognitive beliefs and moral judgements. I will present a reductio of his argument in order to more clearly explain this commonly known as the is-ought gap, the fact/value distinction, or Hume's Law:

P1 beliefs are not motivating

P2 moral judgments are motivating

C1 because of this difference in properties, moral judgements cannot be beliefs

This argument proposes that one cannot derive conative and normative motivations from purely descriptive propositions i.e. beliefs. Hume argues that beliefs alone are not motivating, and as moral judgements appear *prima facie* to be motivating, then this difference in nature means that moral judgements cannot be beliefs. I agree with both

of his premises, but I disagree with his conclusion – even though this is an apparently rock-solid syllogism. I am able to disagree with Hume because there is a glaring flaw in this argument – there are hidden premises in this procession of logic. Of course, a moral judgement or belief is different to a normal belief or judgement, that is clear – it has the ‘moral’ modifier.

This response I will call the ‘hidden premise’ argument. In this, I will argue why there is a hidden premise, and why it is hugely significant. The ‘hidden premise’ that I speak of is in the separation between a belief and a moral judgement. Of course they are different; the ‘moral’ modifies the ‘judgement’. It is common sense that when we are talking about the moral sphere, we ascribe this supposedly ‘queer’ motivation and authority.

Furthermore, it is not only the addition of ‘moral’ which makes the moral judgement motivating, as I will continue to argue. There is an easily made – yet still mistaken – assumption in the arguments that moral judgements, or more specifically moral values themselves, are *necessarily* intrinsically motivating. If it is possible to not be motivated by something, then it cannot be a necessary property of it. This, I argue, is the error. It is clear that there are some who are either ignorant of or simply disregard moral value as motivating – it does not drive them to act. So, how do moral judgements become motivating to us?

I would suggest the argument is in truth more like this:

Beliefs or descriptive facts *alone* are not motivating. Values are only motivating *if* they are accepted as a valid and valuable motivator by the subject. If moral value is accepted, then it can motivate action. If a belief is tied to the accepted moral value (a moral

judgement/belief), it can motivate moral action. Moral judgements then, are motivating by way of being valued.

One has to accept the value of a moral judgement in order to be motivated by it. If one accepts the value of ethics or moral judgements, and has a belief based on this accepted value, then that belief can guide and motivate action. It is this acceptance and internalisation of the value of morality that motivates our actions, and our beliefs about them that informs and directs our motivated actions.

If you did not care about the motivator, and had no relationship with the value, then you would not be motivated by it. Morality itself does not have the property of being motivating. It may appear that it does, because almost everyone who considers the metaphysical nature of ethics has been spending their life with a relationship with the value of moral good and accept that it is a valid motivation. If the value is not accepted, then it is irrelevant. Moral value *should* be accepted and internalised by everyone, because it is valuable for everyone, but this does not necessitate that it is *intrinsically and definitively* motivating. Likewise, someone who is not concerned with physical health may undertake unhealthy habits with no regard for the consequences. Another example is if one does not incorporate the value of being rich as a motivator in their lives, they would not be motivated to perform actions simply to make themselves rich. They would act differently from someone who accepts this motive and value and bases their way of life accordingly. If someone did not know what the virtue of courage or temperance were, or had no desire to be courageous or temperate, then they would not be motivated by this. They have no link to these moral virtue, and are not acting because of these motivators. On the other hand, someone who understands these virtues, wants to act through them, and accepts them as part of their moral identity, will

be motivated by these - and they have valid grounds for doing so as they are of value to them.

Moral values and ethics are valuable *for* everyone, they are in the most literal sense good for everyone. However, this does not mean that it is valuable *to* everyone - not everyone holds these values as closely as others. People - as moral agents - *ought* to be motivated by the moral good. So, whilst the property of being motivating is not intrinsic to the nature of moral value, it should be presented as something that people want to pursue. It is good for someone to act morally and have such moral motivations, but we cannot expect someone who is ignorant of this value to be motivated the same and act in the same manner as one who is.

Utilising this as a foundation to continue to outline the metaethical shape of constructionism, I will address in what i hope to be an efficient manner the other dimensions of this theory. Railton (1986) addresses what he sees as the thirteen key dimensions of moral realism in his paper *Moral realism*. I will make use of this incredibly helpful list as a logical structure to outline the constructionist theoretical position.

“Claims - and accusations - of moral realism typically extend along some or. all of the following dimensions. Roughly put:

“(1) Cognitivism - Are moral judgments capable of truth and falsity?”

Constructionism can say that yes, moral judgements can be true or false. The value in question is flourishing. Statements about flourishing can be objective truths based on

natural facts which are in turn assigned moral value. We certainly act as though our beliefs are true or not, and moral judgements function as beliefs do with our attachment to them. This is difficult, however, due to our lack of objectivity (as a consequence of our being flawed subjects) and lack of full knowledge of this value. So, for more practical purposes, we may have a 'soft' 'truth' in how it is consistent with our paradigm and with our knowledge, goals, and values. By which I mean, this is 'true' as far as we are concerned. Surpassing this, a 'hard' truth in line with the objective values of flourishing and methods of reaching it. I will proceed then in assuming that our moral judgements act as cognitive beliefs. I will address the issues (or lack thereof) in relation to the fact/value distinction shortly.

“(2) Theories of truth - If moral judgments do have truth values, in what sense?”

The concept of flourishing is subject-dependent as it is definitively *about* subjects, but the value to subjects is objective. It is objectively true that flourishing is valuable to subjects. If there are no subjects who are capable of flourishing, then the concept itself becomes essentially meaningless. So we may still proceed that judgements regarding the moral value of flourishing can be true or false in relation to the objective degree of the natural value of flourishing.

“(3) Objectivity - In what ways, if any, does the existence of moral properties depend upon the actual or possible states of mind of intelligent beings?”

Yes and no. Again, as above, flourishing is a definitively individualised and subject-centric or subject-describing concept. The value itself is natural and objective and is

true independent of belief, and able to be observed and known empirically. However, the moral value superadded to the natural value is abstract and constructed. The origin of the existence of moral properties is dependent on the minds of intelligent agents - they chose to assign this moral normativity to the objective value of flourishing. Similar to our creation of language - it is an abstract construction by us, but it has objective rules regarding grammar and syntax that are accepted to be objectively right or wrong. People can therefore be wrong about what is good for them, not simply what people desire or mistakenly believe is good for them and their systems.

“(4) Reductionism - Are moral properties reducible to, or do they in some weaker sense supervene upon, nonmoral properties?”

Yes to some extent. However as flourishing is by no means a simple or basic concept but a complex and holistic one, to say that moral properties are ‘reduced’ is a misnomer. Moral properties are based upon the nonmoral property of flourishing. However they are superadded to and supervenient upon them (albeit weakly as the link is blurred by imperfect knowledge).

“(5) Naturalism - Are moral properties natural properties?”

Constructionism occupies a very strange position between a non-reductive quasi-naturalism and error theory. The objective value that our normative moral values are based on is a real natural value. But we have an epistemological separation from this perfect objective value (i.e., we do not yet know it). Moreover, the moral value is abstractly superadded to this anyway, so the moral value itself does not exist

independently of us as subjects. This is a minor conundrum. Because of both the huge complexity of the value of human flourishing and the definitive multiply realisable nature as a result of different specific human functioning (as discussed earlier in this project) added to our current lack of complete knowledge of it. We do not have a grasp of the objective value of human flourishing. However, there is a potential for us to gain this knowledge, and this is still an objective fact which is about this value. There is an objective foundation to our intersubjective abstract construction of ethics. It is simply that we as subjects and agents have only our best conception of this objective truth/knowledge/value to work with and so this knowledge of value is somewhat imperfect in this. To put this simply there is an objective value of flourishing, this can be slightly different between people and there are different ways to reach this goal. We do not know everything about this value or the ways of reaching it, so all we have is what we know so far and what we believe about this. Here we have the epistemic separation. The value of flourishing is not necessarily itself a moral good even if it is a natural good. Thus, to create this moral normativity, we (super)add to this natural value another value - a moral one. This value is on top of the natural and is supervenient upon it (or at least our knowledge of it as previously addressed. This, I will call the 'supernatural' value - as it is not apart from nature as an *unnatural* value would be, it is on top of nature and is an extension of it, hence super-natural.

“(6) Empiricism-Do we come to know moral facts in the same way we come to know the facts of empirical science, or are they revealed by reason or by some special mode of apprehension?”

We know our morals empirically and through the abstraction and construction of moral values from observable, knowable natural, social, and human values. As we learn about ourselves, we may develop and continue to refine and develop our moral systems.

“(7) Bivalence - Does the principle of the excluded middle apply to moral judgments?”

This is a difficult question again. Because of some of things outlined above, there are different dimensions to flourishing, and we of course have an imperfect knowledge of it. Thus we have to take into account individual and systems level factors, ignorance, and situational factors. Yes things can be right or wrong, and better or worse, but there are also degrees of good or better, or bad and worse. Thus we can have relative truths - in relation to the individual, system, and situation. If moral philosophy followed the principle of bivalence, it would be far simpler and its issues would likely have already been solved at this point. So in short the answer is that it is not so simple.

“(8) Determinateness - Given whatever procedures we have for assessing moral judgments, how much of morality is likely to be determinable?”

According to constructionism, we learn about moral values which are based on a natural value empirically, and abstract from this our moral values and systems. We are continually working on developing and constructing it but we do not know everything that we need yet. We have already learned much, and we have the capability to learn more. Therefore, we are capable of determining much of how we can assess moral judgements, but we have not yet been able to determine everything.

“(9) Categoricity - Do all rational agents necessarily have some reason to obey moral imperatives?”

Why does this value matter? Why should I accept these standards, act in this way and not act in some other way? Why should I want to act morally - what motivates me to be a good agent? What if I don't want to do all of that? These are all valid questions that a theory such as this must answer, and I will begin approaching such an answer now.

Flourishing is of indisputable objective value to moral agents (see tautological argument). If a moral imperative is in keeping with the principles outlined and conduces to flourishing in the best possible way then yes people do have a reason to follow the imperative. However, this ethical theory does not rely on imperatives to function or to be action-guiding, although they can be used as tools to do so. The flexibility of the theory allows us to use tools such as imperatives, principles such as the universalizability principle, and the hedonic calculus, cost/benefit analyses and others to help make sense of a situation and guide an informed, expert decision.

“(10) Universality - Are moral imperatives applicable to all rational agents, even (should such exist) those who lack a reason to comply with them?”

This is a difficult question. The moral theory outlined by constructionism is a human moral theory - it is about what is good for us. The principles and concepts utilised may be applied in much the same way to other rational agents however the expressions and applications may differ. The value of flourishing is by definition in everyone's interest,

however, flourishing or 'interest' may differ so universality may be slightly more flexible. If a principle/imperative is perfectly consistent with flourishing both logically and practically, then surely it is universally good for those for whom this is true. Considering we are the only rational or moral agents that presently know of, I will accept universality to a certain extent here.

A challenge to this would be if it was possible to have conflicts of functions and consequently opposing expressions of flourishing. This, I do not believe to be possible. If there appears to be a conflict between two or more agents or between an agent and a system, then we may examine this issue further. We must ask questions about where the flaw lies, the basis of the conflict, and which may carry more weight. Does one of the party's defined flourishing vitiate the flourishing of another? If this appears so, then we must dig deeper to more fundamental functions rather than superficial functions such as a project or social role. I believe as human moral agents are fundamentally geared towards cooperation and mutual benefit. This may overrule other conflicts brought about by things such as profession, religious beliefs, prejudice or others - no matter how close to our identity and function we believe them to be. This does not mean that people are expected to simply work together no matter what, and to always agree and ignore such important things to us. The notion that conflict or disagreement is definitively immoral is ridiculous - challenges must be made to improve or disprove things that agents find disagreeable. However, this does mean that at the most basic level of our flourishing and virtues defined by our functions, conflict is not present.

“(11) Assessment of existing moralities - Are present moral beliefs approximately true, or do prevailing moral intuitions in some other sense constitute privileged data?”

Existing moralities contribute much that is valuable but are incomplete. They outline and inform our current knowledge and paradigm, which is what we have to work with so far. We need to consider our best knowledge/paradigms and their consistency with the values outlined. Existing and previous theories and research has contributed to this knowledge and given us useful tools to work with and pointed out difficulties that must be accounted for in our best theory.

Intuitions do not hold a special place (- see moral psychology section) as they are simply a cognitive function and do not have special access to data that is otherwise inaccessible or unavailable.

“(12) Relativism - Does the truth or warrant of moral judgments depend directly upon individually- or socially-adopted norms or practices?”

The answer here is yes and no. Our Moral paradigms and systems are socially/individually constructed but based on objective value. Our socially and individually accepted practices should be informed by our best knowledge and flourishing - not social conformity for its own sake. Social norms do not define morality, but the other way around (or at least this is how it ought to be). For a further elaboration on this important topic, see the section on moral relativism.

“(13) Pluralism - Is there a uniquely good form of life or a uniquely right moral code, or could different forms of life or moral codes be appropriate in different circumstances?”

Flourishing, or the 'good life' can be expressed in different ways but has consistent and universal features. The good life for human moral agents is much the same to a large extent as we share many identical functions, the difference arises in more particular adaptations. The expression of virtue is itself flexible and is to be applied according to the agent and the specific situation at hand. Agents may differ in personality, dispositions, social and personal functions and they may be parts of different systems which incorporate their own particular differences. The values expressed are the same, but their adaptation to particular applications may result in apparently different demonstrations of flourishing. Values and virtues can also be of differing levels of importance according to the environment an agent finds themselves in, whether this is a physical environment, social, economic, and political environments and many others that shape our lives may also shape particular things that are 'good' for us which differ from others in different moral circumstances.

Block 10: CHALLENGING CONSTRUCTIONISM

An important part of constructionism is the separation between the objective value of flourishing, and our subject dependent knowledge of it. This brings a significant struggle of how we actually *know* and recognise flourishing. This epistemic struggle, in addition to the difficulty of defining flourishing in the first place; it is both complex, and also can differ slightly between individuals. How then can we define such a seemingly protean concept? Flourishing - as I have defined earlier - is the state of a being when it is excelling in its functions. This includes both its needs being met in such a way that

contributes to their development (welfare) and the exercising of 'good' or productive and valuable functions. But what does this actually consist of for a human being? Whilst we have of course seen and learned of supposedly 'great' people, were they flourishing in this sense? What does a 'perfect human being look like - in both the natural and moral sense? What would a perfectly flourishing social system be like? So many questions we simply do not know the answer to and I would not dare suggest that I know the answers either. Failure to grasp this could spell a fatal flaw in this theory. Theorising about human nature has been done for thousands of years, and still, no complete theory has arisen. This is what constructionism strives towards; an understanding of people and systems and what is 'good' for and of both.

What then, does all of this mean for the constructionist project? if it fails to produce a model of this utopia and such a moral superman, what use is the theory? With all of this, it seems that the concept of flourishing is a flimsy foundation upon which to build everything. Yet, this is what we have, and what we are, and so we will proceed with it.

With this in mind, we must first search for universals, if not commonalities between individuals on a large scale. Put simply - we must find things that are 'good' for and of all individuals. There are many more common features than may appear on the surface level (Younkins, 2008), even if their precise expression may differ. Cultures and individuals around the world all express certain functions and attributes which are fundamentally the same, but have their own individualised flavour (Younkins, 2008). With regards to virtues, we can all agree on the value of such attributes of wisdom, intellectual virtues such as intelligence, curiosity, open-mindedness, and of character virtues such as courage, integrity, care, and more. The issue comes more from how we

consider our different lives as individuals - we cannot expect different people and personalities to flourish the same in exactly the same manner. We have different particular 'functions' in relation to our microsystems: our jobs, social groups, families and more. This means that our individual expression of flourishing may differ although it is fundamentally the same. As outlined at the start of this, flourishing is an active state of good - of the agent exercising value (the good of an agent), creating value, and also of values of welfare that are good for them. Thus, the particular needs and expressions of flourishing may differ whilst the basic building blocks; the foundations, remain the same. So, as we progress towards a more complete understanding of human flourishing, we can see just how it stands with regard to universals and relativity.

As a further result of this incomplete knowledge and lack of objectivity, it then becomes more difficult to commensurate and judge between paradigms. If we do not know the answer, how can we know if we are closer to it or further away? In this case, the question is how we can compare paradigms and systems and say one is better than the other.

I have addressed this in part in the section on relativism. The only honest answer I can give may be unsatisfactory but is simply realistic. We do the best we can, with the knowledge we have, and our best judgements. An imperfect answer, but the truth is often disappointing. We as a species have fumbled our way thus far, it seems we simply have to keep taking the steps onwards and upwards (hopefully) without seeing the top of the staircase.

A second issue that could be raised to this theory is how we relate to our surrounding environment. Are we to develop ourselves to suit our surroundings, or are we to adapt

our surroundings to help us flourish? This is a hugely difficult question. This will largely depend on the surroundings and the individuals - where the 'flaw' lies. It is important here to reiterate; flourishing is not about what people want, desire, or what would make them comfortable, it is about needs and bringing the best out of individuals and systems.

Firstly, I will address the individual. If the surrounding environment does support general flourishing, and the individual is capable of making changes for the betterment of their own flourishing and to allow the system to meet their needs better, then of course it can be good for an individual to adapt to their environment.

To change a social environment can be hugely difficult - and sometimes dangerous - for those attempting to pioneer it.

Expanding on this, how does one act when they find themselves in an immoral system? What if the attempt to change the system has no positive consequences and only causes suffering? What if, even if 'positive' change is made but the system still suffers as a result and people flourish less? Is that a positive change at all? This is where the holistic nature of constructionism - being able to look at intentions, the agent themselves, and the outcome of their actions comes to the fore. This means that even if an action does not achieve a positive outcome, the good intentions and the virtue exercised can still be appreciated, albeit perhaps to a lesser degree as a result of the outcome.

Should someone risk their own wellbeing in order to fight for changes, or should they try to adapt themselves to flourish as best they can within their socio-moral environment? History seems to paint a picture of such revolutionaries as heroes - they are trying to (and sometimes succeeding) make the world a better place for the future; somewhere where people can flourish better. But often history may gloss over the suffering and sacrifices made in order to enact such positive change. Do people have an

obligation to make such sacrifices for the 'greater good' which they themselves may not benefit from? This goes back to our definition of flourishing and its relation to virtue.

Whilst obviously it is difficult for someone to flourish when they are dead, such extreme exercise of virtue and will is a mark of a moral exemplar. This is nothing new - we regard such people with awe and respect for their virtues and their work to improve the world. So, yes, it is a mark of virtue to seek to challenge the system to be better, but are people *obligated* to do so? I do not believe so. Whilst to rebel in this way may be a virtuous act, and a 'better' thing to do than to not, it should not be forced upon the agent. This moral theory does not rely on imperatives in guiding action - it relies on the moral abilities and conscience of its individuals to decide. Virtue and flourishing come from the agent - it is not given to or put upon them. As stated earlier in Layer 2; rules in a social system are there as a guide and to help create a safe space for individuals to become virtuous and then expand on these 'rules'. The social system must always have the ability to change and grow in response to such challenges. However, in such an 'immoral' or flawed system, such flexibility may not be provided, and the individual then has a comparatively much more difficult task to instigate change. Again, the sacrifice required to do so ties back into how we define flourishing. In a moral or character sense an agent can flourish whilst physically or emotionally suffering (Hall, Langer & McMartin, 2010). However, these factors are of course important in a fulfilling, happy life which we may associate with flourishing. These sacrifices may lay the foundation or spark the potential for a better system, positively affecting the ability of many more people to flourish.

Why is this theory better than other current or past moral theories?

Constructionism takes morality as it is - it is grounded in reality. This means it is guided by our knowledge through scientific research, and observation of the patterns of how ethics and morals have developed over time. It takes a holistic view of ethics, taking into account the intention, the agent, and the consequences of moral actions, rather than taking one and ignoring others. I believe (or like to think) that this structure does so in a manner that paints a picture of a complete system of morality which is theoretically sound and practically useful in guiding behaviour, social structures and legislation, and other associated practices. Instead of focussing on a single basic value i.e., happiness or welfare which are passive, or writing a list of rules or imperatives, both of which provide a limited and inhuman picture of morality, constructionism recognises these areas and tools, and integrates them into the whole. The bi-layered system accounts for both the individual and social sides of morality, avoiding the common accusation of egoism or selfishness associated with virtue theory. With this, it recognises what is needed for a virtuous, flourishing agent, and how they fit in with and interact with their social systems and microsystems, what this means in relation to guiding acts and how to achieve it, whilst still respecting the complexity of flourishing and morality itself.

Constructionism is also in itself a challenge; to learn more about ourselves and our world, and to be better, to use this to develop and progress ourselves and what is around us to new heights.

Block 11: WHAT MORE FOR CONSTRUCTIONISM?

This final section concerns what is lacking in this project, and suggestions of where this theory and structure can be taken.

In this project, I have attempted to outline the skeleton of constructionism, the theory and position, how it works, and the rationale behind this new theory. These bones leave room for expansion upon it, and the potential to go into further detail in particulars in all areas. From the first layer, with regards to what precisely are the needs for an individual, and how do we meet these whilst also giving the individual the ability to be a true individual. In the second layer, one could elaborate on what sort of societal structure would best realise this flourishing and what laws may be instigated to protect the flourishing of the individuals, with appropriate firmness but also the ability to be challenged and changed. What would the justice system built around these norms and values look like - and can such a system be built upon the principles of restorative justice and rehabilitation work? What does a social and moral education look like? How is it assessed and how does it interact with other subjects? How do we 'train' people to be good and how can this be practically achieved? What more can we learn about moral psychology and the processes behind our moral decision making? Are there issues that mean constructionism does not work as a theory? Are there challenges that it does not overcome or explain?

These are only questions relating to what I have written here, I hope that this theory can be expanded upon and challenged by people across the academic sphere so that it

can be refined and improved. There are always more questions to ask, and I have almost certainly missed much - the future can allow us to develop this with your help.

Appendix 1: METAETHICS REDUCTIO

P1 Moral Philosophy aims to find what is morally valuable to us

P2 What is of objective value to us as moral agents is objectively valuable

P3 What is objectively valuable ought to be valued and accepted as valuable

P4 Human flourishing can be defined as being in a prosperous, good state, where one is excelling on one's functions and/or roles

P5 To be a flourishing (human) moral agent is to be in a good state of being

- link

C1 (P2,3,4,5) flourishing is what is valuable to us as moral agents

C2 (C1) Things that conduce or contribute to flourishing are valuable to us

P6 The value of the whole is greater than the sum of any single constituent part or contributory factor

P7 Human flourishing is an end in itself - the end of our actions and our life is aimed at our conception of flourishing

P8 The moral good is the end of our moral actions - the highest good

C3 (P8) The moral good must itself be an end

P9 (P2,3) What is valuable to moral agents ought to be valued by moral agents - this value is intrinsic

C4 (C1, P9) flourishing ought to be what is valued by (human) moral agents

P10 We do not know everything about human flourishing, and therefore our beliefs may not be true. Thus our attitudes/beliefs are separate from the facts

C5 Because P10, we must rely on our best knowledge and conception of human flourishing to measure this value

P11 Our beliefs about value are based on our beliefs about human flourishing, which is in turn about the objective facts about flourishing

P12 Because our beliefs are separated from the facts (as of yet) in this way, the normative moral value assigned or 'superadded' to them is abstract and subjective, but it is based on a judgement of objective value (flourishing)

C6 (C4, C5, P12) Our moral beliefs and values are an abstract intersubjective construction based upon our judgement of the objective facts about flourishing

P13 this separation means there are for lack of a better term two 'conceptions' of the good, one is the objective method which is currently not known to us, and the other is our best paradigm of the good

C7 (C5, C6, P13) The moral good (as is available to us) is our accepted best paradigm of flourishing. This strives to match the true good, which is the objectively true human flourishing.

(C8 (all of the above) A moral theory must take a holistic approach to explain human flourishing and how to achieve this complex phenomenon, taking into consideration our best knowledge of ourselves and the systems we exist and operate within. This theory must also realise that by nature individual human agents are flawed, and account for this.)

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