

## **At least can we all agree?**

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It seems that three potential solutions to moral disagreement are available, both with desirable merits and challenges to overcome. If we can posit some moral knowledge of facts or of certain universal moral truths, determined or communicated by a moral authority, this would offer clear answers to any and all moral disputes. However some take moral knowledge to be too implausible to maintain; they might prefer to settle moral disputes by means of consensus and widespread moral agreement about certain fundamental moral principles or norms, and the reasoning underpinning them. The other alternative would be to embrace an error theorist and fictionalist approach which suggests that morality doesn't exist as anything more than a practically useful notion to believe in.

Knowledge might appear to be more heavy in the conditions it carries, namely supplying a sufficient account of moral authority or of a moral lawgiver (whether human or supernatural). Each account faces issues of its own, and so will require stringent examination that is not my focus here. However philosophically heavy knowledge might be, it at least carries greater merit to the moral epistemologist and the normative ethicist. Consensus only really fulfils its potential as a way of applying moral norms and principles after they have been settled, discerned or communicated.

The principal challenge for consensus is that it doesn't have any guarantee of certainty and truth; it merely succeeds in resolving disputes, and so agents who settle a dispute may still proceed in a state of doubt. Worse still, some agents may sacrifice some deeply held moral convictions purely in the name of compromise and conflict-resolution.

Fictionalism doesn't really resolve disagreements in the same way, but merely serves to dispense with them and treat them as a non-issue, but it may serve as the only suitable solution if agents cannot agree either on moral matters or on an account of moral authority.

This talk aims to explore the merits and burdens of knowledge, consensus, and fictionalism. In particular I aim to defend the claim that, despite carrying some heavy philosophical baggage and seeming at least as implausible as universal moral agreement, moral knowledge is always the more desirable long-term means of resolving disagreements.