



Sketch of Christian Ethics & Academic Ethics

Thinking About How Christian Ethics
Informs Academic Ethics and Perhaps
Vice-Versa

Project

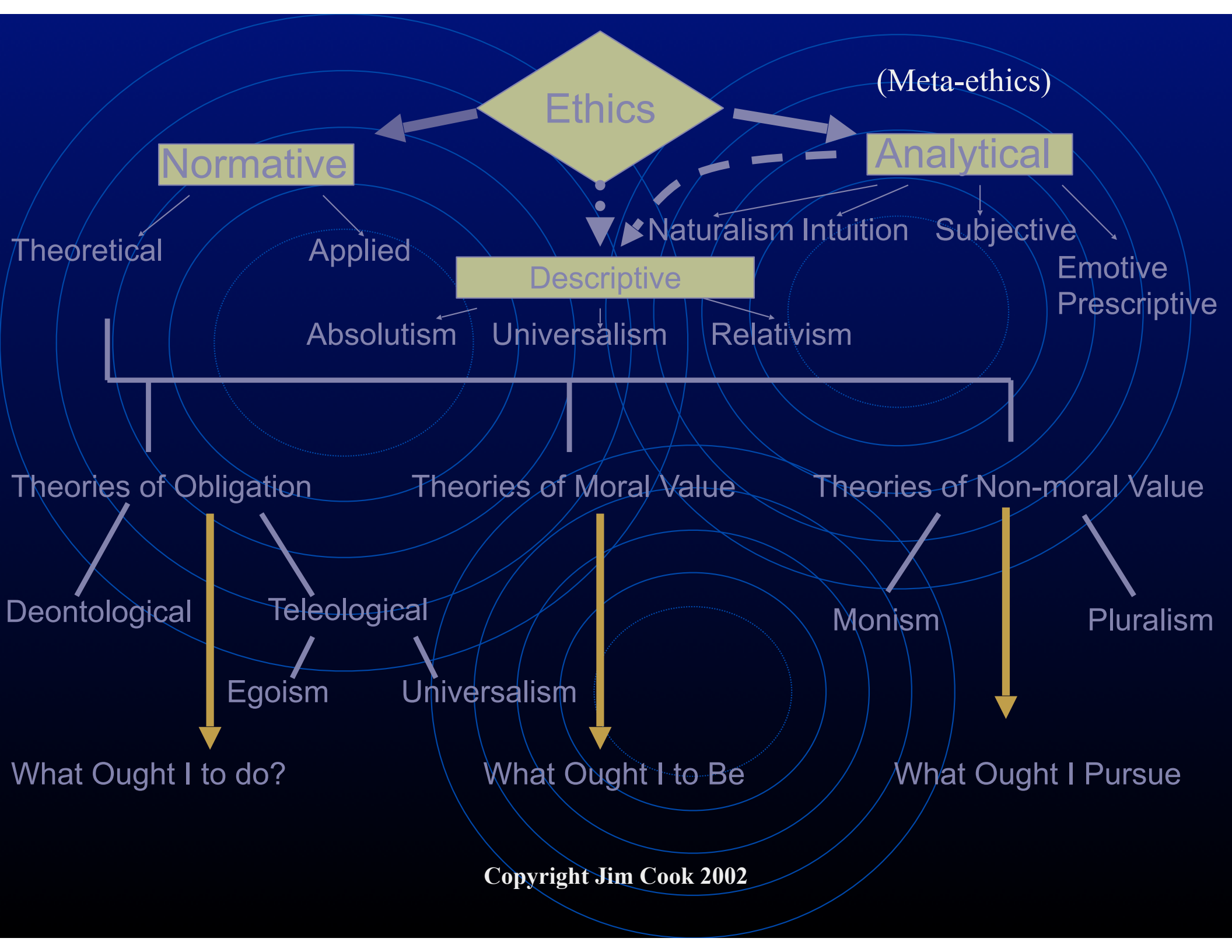
- This is some sort of integrative project
- This is something a Christian who is a professional ethicist would want to think about
- This is something a Christian in general would want to think about

How Do I Think About This?

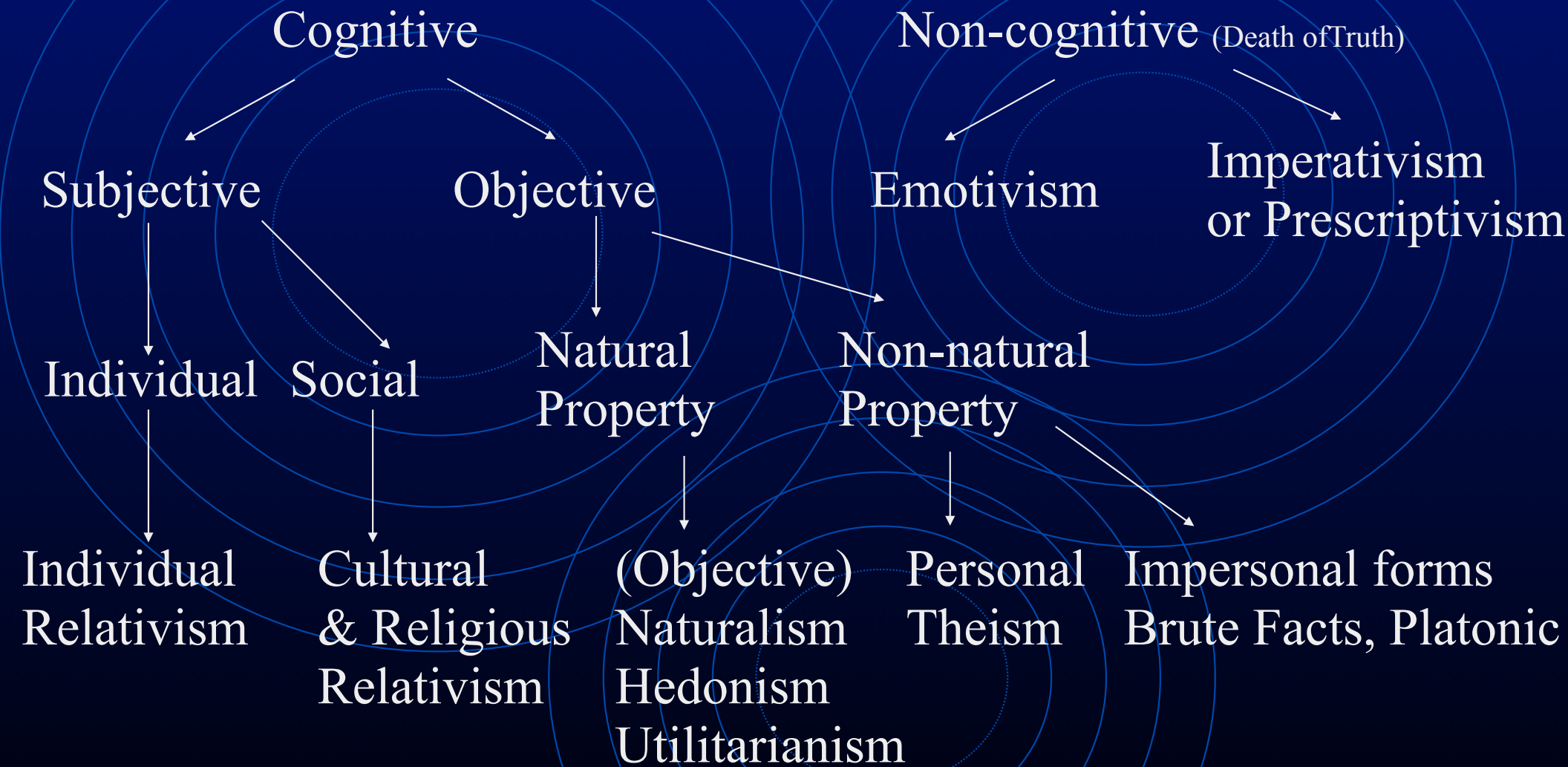
- Typically our ethical lives are first informed at home
- But education can force” us to consider a more systematic look
 - But what we often see has (or certainly can have) a secular flavor to it.
 - There is a need to “test the spirits.”
 - There is a need to compare and check with the text....

We Begin With Ethics (Generally)

- My overview of a widely accepted secularized discipline



Moral Statement Schema



What Can I Learn From This Sort of Ethical Analysis?

- How does this differ from what I take to be Christian ethics?
- Is it completely different
- Is it exactly alike?
- Are there some things that relate, but others that do not...and if so, how do they properly relate?

Now I Turn To Christian Ethics

- Where can I learn about this--primary source(s)?
 - Conscience & Nature?
 - Bible
- Are there ways I can organize and systematize my views?
- A good idea for a follower of Christ to start with the Bible.

Overview

- The nature of the Bible
- The nature of the Bible's ethical teaching
- The modality of that teaching
- Some key passages

The Nature of the Bible

- Collection of books written by many authors over roughly 1500 years of time—written to different culture & time
- Divine revelation given by inspiration and received and understood by illumination, by careful exegesis and by proper hermeneutical methods
 - **Part** of that divine revelation could be called theological ethics—fuller information and clarity than one might get through general revelation alone

The Nature of the Bible's Ethical Teaching

- How do we “receive” these teachings?
 - General revelation—built in structure into nature? Law written on our hearts?
 - Special Revelation—giving clarity and “thickening” the ethical community’s moral insights
 - Personal—Jesus
 - Propositional—Bible commands, imperatives and restrictions
 - Narrative—Bible story—but somewhat reducible to propositions, but often gives fuller explanation to propositions
 - Poems, songs, etc.
 - Illumination is where we discover what God meant to communicate
 - Application comes when we bring or live out those properly interpreted ethical principles and virtues in our contemporary setting

The Nature of the Bible's Ethical Teaching

- Conclusion: Besides general revelation about moral principles we have special revelation about these principles, virtues, and so forth

The Modality of That Teaching

- Why do we have to do systematic theology?
 - Is there a reason the Bible has the form it does (stories, propositions, commands, etc.) **all mixed together**?
 - Some take the form of the Bible to argue for a “contextual” view of knowledge—a no foundations view where the most substantive part of our noetic structure is shaped by the interpretive community—I don’t particularly hold this view
 - Actually the form it takes might be that stories and propositions **do a more complete job of explanation then only one form**—but that doesn’t mean there aren’t foundations to knowledge

How Are Ethics Taught in the Bible?

- Mainly through **Divine Commands & Narratives**
- The commands/principles are rooted in God's nature/character.
 - The Ten Commandments (Ex. 20 ff)
 - The Great and Foremost Commandments (Matt. 22: 37-39)
 - Apostolic Scripture, Epistles, etc.
 - Some of which appear to be absolutes (no exceptions or exemptions)
 - Thou shall have no other gods before me (Deut 20:3)
 - Some of which appear to NOT be absolutes (that is, WITH exceptions or exemptions)
 - Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Ex. 20:8); yet Jesus healed on the Sabbath

How Are Ethics Taught in the Bible?

- Some of which appear to be motivated teleologically (for an end, purpose or consequence)
 - Honor your parents that your days may be. . . (Deut 5:16)
- Some of which appear to be deontologically motivated (a duty without regard to consequences)
 - Children obey your parents for this right (Eph. 6:1)
- Some which appear to have a virtue ethic (habits formed) perspective
 - Proven character doesn't disappoint. . .Rom. 5: 1-5
- It appears that virtue ethics are also taught through stories or narratives
 - Jesus
 - Joseph

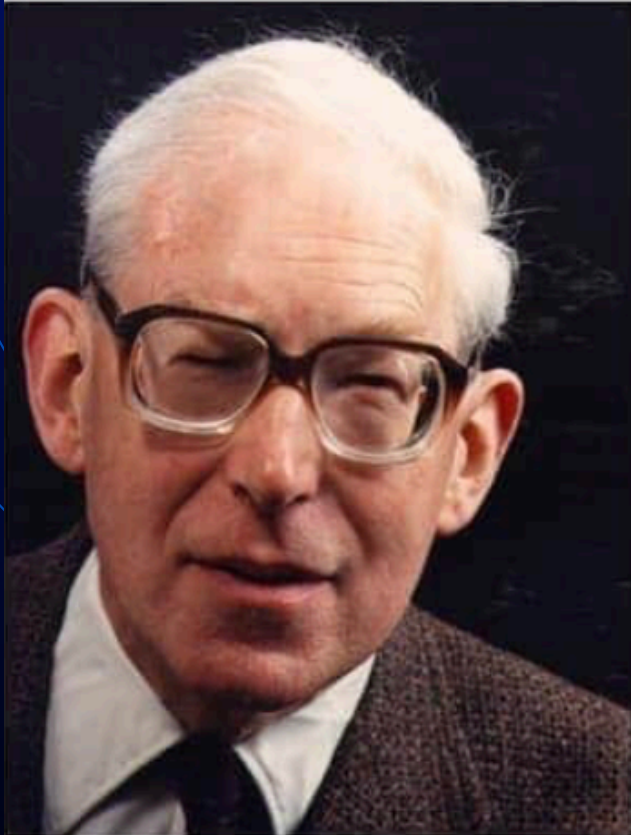
How Are Ethics Taught in the Bible?

- The Stories of Jesus and Joseph help us not only with one's doing, but also with one's being.
 - But that's not the only way virtue ethics are taught in the Bible
 - Ephesians 4:17 – 24
 - Galatians 2:19 -- 3:15

Summary

- I think there are some areas where my knowledge of Christian ethics informs the disciplines
 - Reminds me of the metaphysics & epistemology my views commit me to...and vice versa--helps me trust my moral intuitions
 - It also helps me to see the need for a blended view of Christian ethics—but not secular/Christian blend
 - Natural Law ethics can have common ground with other types of moral reasoning

New Addition (quote)



Our business is to present the
Christian faith clothed in modern
terms, not to propagate modern
thought clothed in Christian terms...
Confusion here is fatal.

— *J. I. Packer* —

AZ QUOTES

Summary

- Rather a blend of moral reasoning approaches which include absolutes (graded), commands, *aretaic* (virtue ethics), deontological and teleological considerations
 - A key is seeing where these apply in specific situations
 - A key is seeing how they should be weighted in specific situations
 - Here's where I might (for one) differ from purely secular ethics

Summary

- I think the academic discipline of ethics can inform my Christian ethics to some degree because it can contain some (especially analytical) truth, and it can help me systematize my thinking; it can give me fresh insights into what God is doing...and yet Christian ethics are distinct from non-Christian & secular ethics.