

Jussi Suikkanen

Jussi talks about his research into meta-ethics

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My name is Jussi Suikkanen, I'm a lecturer here at the Philosophy Department at the University of Birmingham. I work in an area of philosophy that is called meta-ethics – I think I should explain what that is. In normal life people have ethical disagreements about abortion or war or whatever, and some philosophers take part in those ethical disagreements. I'm not really one of them – I'm more interested in what happens when people disagree. What do people mean when they say some action is wrong, or what are the properties or rightness or wrongness of actions, or what sort of thoughts do we have when we think something is wrong? Is it more like desiring something or more believing something. So those would be the central questions in meta-ethics that I'm interested in.

I really like this area of Philosophy for a couple of reasons. One reason is that there have been huge developments in the area during the recent last twenty years or so and there's a big group of young people working on this area and it's exciting. The second reason I like to work in this area is that I can draw from other areas of Philosophy like Philosophy of language or Philosophy of mind and that really interests me. The last thing I wanted to say was sort of theory I hold about these questions. So I tend to think of these questions in terms of truth. So there are different claims that are true in different ways. So some people say that marmite is yummy, and that might be true, and other people think that, say there's two tables in this room, or that wall over there is blue. All these claims might be true claims but true claims in a different way, and I'm interested in in what way are ethical claims true.

I won't say that they are objectively true – they are not true relative to different groups of people – but then I don't want to take on any big meta-physical commitments with that theory.