SERIES I

IS *ANYTHING* "GOOD" ON TELEVISION? THE NATURE OF MORAL VALUE

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EPISODE 1: TRUTH AND NIHILISM IN ETHICS

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INTRODUCTION

In Showtime's racy drama, *Californication*, Hank Moody (David Duchovny) tries to apologize to his daughter Becca (Madeleine Martin) for something he's done "wrong." But Becca responds: "There is no right or wrong, Dad, just the consequences of your actions. You taught me that" ("In a Lonely Place," season 2). Becca's claim is incredibly controversial. Can you imagine what the world might be like if she were right? Our condemnation of Hitler or Stalin or Pol Pot would just be a matter of – what? preference? We do not *prefer* someone like Hitler? We do not *care*

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for Stalin's actions? Perhaps morality is just an agreement among people about how to act. That would mean that people in our group do not prefer that Pol Pot killed 21% of Cambodia – roughly 2.5 million people – for his selfish interests.

As strange as it may sound, some ethicists have presented arguments of this sort against the truth of ethical claims. The view that there are no true moral claims is called "moral nihilism." This is stronger than mere skepticism. "Moral skepticism" is the view that we do not know whether any moral claims are true. Moral skepticism is an epistemic thesis (a claim about what we can know). Moral skeptics admit that there might be objective moral facts, though it is not clear that we know what they are. Moral nihilism, on the other hand, is an ontological thesis (a claim about reality). Moral nihilists argue that there are no moral facts about reality. Since there are arguments for nihilism, given our commitment to the principle of charity (see "The Pilot Episode"), it is in our best interests to take them seriously.

To see how some moral philosophers arrived at nihilism, we need to know a little more about the nature of ethical theories. So, we'll begin with the traditional view that there are at least some true moral claims (e.g., you should not murder, you ought not rape, etc.) and then see how problems with this view lead to a version of nihilism that is growing in popularity among philosophers.

Most ethical debates begin with two assumptions: (i) moral claims are either true or false and (ii) humans can, for the most part, know the truth value of a moral claim. This view is known as "cognitivism." But in the twentieth century, some ethicists began challenging the coherence of (i). Claims about right and wrong are abstract, elusive, difficult to express clearly, and difficult to defend. Philosophers have faced many difficulties defining or explaining other abstract entities, such as properties (e.g., green, round, soft), relations (between, taller than), modalities ("*x* is necessary," "*x* is possible"), numbers, and language. But attempting to define or explain moral concepts is at least as difficult and perhaps more so. At least claims about numbers, language, and modalities can be meaningfully expressed using the formal rules of mathematics, grammar, and logic. And with properties, at least we can point to something like red or soft or smells-rotten-egg-like, even if we can't say exactly what it means for something to be a property. But what are we pointing at when we say an act is wrong? ("Surely, nothing in our sensory experience," so the argument goes). What tools could we use to speak meaningfully about moral claims? ("Surely, not our five senses"). But, it seems like moral claims are more important than claims about numbers. Everything we value is at stake.

Traditional ethicists like Aristotle, Kant, Mill, and Hume are cognitivists known as "moral realists." Despite their disagreements, they all accept (i) and (ii), and they also accept (iii) some moral claims are true. Different moral theories produce different (sometimes drastically different) results about which actions are morally permissible, but their disagreements do not entail that some moral claims are not objectively true and some objectively false. Their disagreement simply means that not all ethical theories are correct. If Kant is right, Aristotle, Mill, and Hume are wrong. If Aristotle is right, Kant, Mill, and Hume are wrong. And so on.

The writers of most TV shows assume at least some version of moral realism, given that most shows have a moral: don't cheat on Mr Woodman's tests (*Welcome Back Kotter*); don't steal from Bert and Ernie (*Sesame Street*); don't kiss your best friend's sister (every coming-of-age comedy); be honest, even when it is difficult (every episode of *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*); etc. But some TV shows challenge these traditional morality tales. For example, on the animated show *Family Guy*, the father of the family, Peter Griffin, is always extremely verbally abusive to his daughter Meg. Peter calls her ugly and fat, and sometimes even forgets he has a daughter. Unfortunately, the scripts never "make it right." To be fair, the show is a satire on the touchy-feely family drama. Nevertheless, the relationship between Peter and Meg is often portrayed as if Peter has done nothing wrong. And this sort of amorality pervades much of the show. What might justify this sort of attitude toward morality?

Difficulties like those mentioned above – whether talk about morality is meaningful – and difficulties with particular ethical theories have led some ethicists to reject (i), though they accept (ii). The view that (ii) is true, but (i) is false is called "non-cognitivism." The idea is that, though some sentences express "right" and "wrong," these expressions are not *claims*, they are not, technically speaking, propositions about reality that can be true or false. They may simply be expressions of our emotional states or prescriptions for action. Remember from "The Pilot Episode" that only claims can be true or false. Neither exclamatory sentences (e.g., "Ouch!" "Dammit!") nor imperative sentences (e.g., "Shut the door!" "Listen to me!") has a truth value. Therefore, if someone could show that all ethical claims were either emotive exclamations or commands, this would show that cognitivism is false and some version of non-cognitivism is the best account of morality.

One widely held non-cognitivist theory is called "emotivism" or "expressivism." Emotivists argue that moral statements are not claims, but are simply expressions of a particular attitude toward that action. For an emotivist, a moral statement like "murder is wrong" means something like,

"Murder, yuck!" There is no fact of the matter about murder or rape or child molestation; there are just attitudes of disapproval that are emotional in nature. Louis Pojman (1990: 145) explains A. J. Ayer's emotivism: "Moral statements are a type of nonsense, albeit a useful type. Even though they cannot be said to be true or false, they express our emotions." Pojman formulates Ayer's argument for emotivism this way:

1. A sentence is cognitively meaningful if and only if it can be verified.
2. Moral sentences cannot be verified.

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3. Therefore, moral sentences are not meaningful.

If this argument is successful, the traditional cognitivist view that moral statements are claims is false; they are more like exclamations than claims. Therefore, we must find some explanation for the widespread use of moral language and its impact on culture and religion. If moral sentences are not meaningful in the same sense that a claim is meaningful, the best explanation for our moral language is that it expresses our emotions. It fulfills an important societal role because it allows us to express our feelings, to communicate strong preferences to others, and to persuade others.

Becca and Hank from *Californication* might be best described as emotivists. After Becca tells Hank she learned that there is no right or wrong from him, Hank says: "Well I guess I don't like the consequences of my actions very much right now." If morality is simply a matter of what we like or dislike, then emotivism is true.

Unfortunately for non-cognitivists, the problems for emotivism are at least as worrisome as those for cognitivism. The first premise of Ayer's argument was quickly shown to be false; it cannot meet its own criterion: premise (1) cannot be verified. In addition, there are strong reasons for thinking we can evaluate moral claims, at least in the same way we evaluate the axioms of arithmetic systems. We have strong intuitions that the axioms of arithmetic are true. All additional tests for their truth are evaluated against these intuitions. If no further intuitions contradict them – that is, they withstand attempts to construct counterexamples – their plausibility increases. The same seems true of moral claims.

Second, we seem to *mean* something different by moral claims than we do by emotive claims. If I say, "I like coffee," and you say, "Well, I don't. I prefer tea," we haven't disagreed about anything. What I have said does not contradict what you have said; both can be true. However, if I say, "Abortion is morally impermissible in all cases," and you say, "Abortion is sometimes morally permissible," then we have made statements that cannot both be true; we have disagreed. In the former statements (about

coffee and tea), we both recognize that we are making statements about ourselves: it is true of you that you like tea. But in the latter statements (about abortion), it is much less clear that the statements are about ourselves. It seems we are making a claim about reality: it is true or false independently of me or you whether abortion is morally permissible.

Third, it seems emotivists cannot account for the universalizability of moral statements. For instance, I like vanilla ice cream. But it is easy to see that others do not and there is no particular reason they should. On the other hand, if I disapprove of *Johnny's* killing Susanne for no reason, I also disapprove of *George's* killing Susanne for no reason. And the same seems true for any name you put in place of Johnny's. It is the killing of Susanne for no reason that's wrong, and it is wrong no matter who does it.

Finally, according to emotivism, the value of a moral statement depends on your *attitude* toward an act. If this is right, then my causing you to have different attitudes would resolve many "moral disagreements." If I have a positive attitude toward murder, then perhaps I can get you to agree by manipulating your brain so that you find murder more tasteful. If emotivism is true, then manipulating your brain is tantamount to giving you good reasons for thinking murder is permissible. Nevertheless, it seems we have good reasons for distinguishing "behavioral manipulation" from "giving reasons." For instance, hypnotizing you so that you say, "Murder is good," any time you hear of one does not constitute a reason for you to think that murder is good. Since emotivism cannot draw this distinction, it is implausible.

Difficulties like these, plus those associated with cognitivism, have led some ethicists to accept both (i) and (ii), but to also argue we should add a further claim: (iv) all moral claims are false. Since these theorists argue that ethical claims *do* express claims about reality that are true or false, they are cognitivists. However, they also argue that all moral claims are false. Our ethical claims are meaningful, just as claims about unicorns are meaningful, but they correspond to nothing in reality, also like claims about unicorns; therefore, all moral claims are false. This view is commonly called "Error Theory" and it is becoming more popular among ethicists, especially among those who study evolutionary psychology. Error theory is a version of nihilism about ethics.

Although eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume is probably best categorized as a utilitarian, he anticipates many of the concerns of error theorists. Hume argues that our ability to reason is subject to our emotions. Because of emotion, we often attempt to manipulate reasons to justify our actions. In fact, Hume argues, the motivation for an action is never purely rational; there is always a trace of emotion. Reason gives us

information; emotion gives us the will to act. He writes: "Since reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition, I infer, that the same faculty is as incapable or preventing volition, or of disputing the preference with any passion or emotion" (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, Section III).

But Hume does not move from this conclusion to emotivism. Emotions lead us to make claims about reality and Hume thinks the most plausible explanation for what these claims are about is either pleasure or pain. So he defends a species of "utilitarianism" (for more on this theory, see Episode 6). Pain and pleasure are emotional motivations to perform or refrain from performing an action. Utilitarianism is a moral theory that says an act is right insofar as it tends to produce more happiness (in this case, pleasure) in the long run and wrong insofar as it tends to produce more unhappiness (in this case, pain) in the long run.

Error theorists argue that Hume's insights point in a different direction. They agree that they do not point to emotivism and they agree that emotions lead us to make claims about reality. However, they disagree that these claims track objective moral features of reality. In a famous paper, philosopher Michael Ruse and biologist E. O. Wilson write, "Beliefs in extrasomatic [body-independent] moral truths and in an absolute is/ought barrier are wrong. . . . The time has come to turn moral philosophy into an applied science" (2001: 421). A few pages later they explain that our study of evolution has revealed that "human beings function better if they are deceived by their genes into thinking that there is a disinterested objective morality binding upon them, which all should obey" (2001: 425). According to Ruse and Wilson, morality is just a useful fiction – we think we're talking about something real, but moral claims are no different than claims about unicorns.

Peter Griffin of *Family Guy* might espouse an error theory of morality. He seems to have no moral compass at all. In the episode, "Petarded" (season 4), Peter takes the MacArthur Genius Test and finds out he's legally mentally retarded. Peter discovers that his newfound legal immunity allows him "get away with anything." He kicks in women's bathroom stalls to see women on the toilet, he throws plates of food across the room, and he cuts in line, talks on the loudspeaker, and burns Lois with hot oil from The Fryolater at a fast-food restaurant, which results in Peter losing custody of his kids. Though he says he feels bad about burning Lois, he uses her bandages as toilet paper and tries to frame his friend Cleveland with prostitutes to get his kids back. At the custody trial, Peter doesn't argue that he deserves his kids back or that there is any moral reason he should

have them; he simply says he *wants* them back. Someone who expresses no sense of right and wrong and acknowledges no moral reasons is a prime candidate for an error theorist.

It is important to note, however, that just because you hold an error theory doesn't mean you will act immorally. There are dozens of practical reasons not to act the way Peter Griffin does, none of which has any moral weight. An error theorist may act morally because it is easier to get along in society, because she doesn't want to go to jail or get sued, because she wants people to like and respect her, because she wants to keep her job, etc. So, holding an error theory doesn't entail anything about how someone will behave, but it does affect how someone answers moral questions, and how someone will behave if she thinks there are no other practical reasons for doing or not doing something (e.g., she won't get caught).

One of the foremost proponents of error theory is philosopher J. L. Mackie (1917–81). In the following passage, Mackie argues that if moral claims were true then they would be true about "non-natural" features of reality, that is, features of reality not available to the five senses or scientific experiments. Since there is no good way to make sense of non-natural features of reality, there is no good way to make sense of true moral claims. Therefore, all moral claims are, because of their purported subject matter, false.

THE CASE FOR NIHILISM

J. L. Mackie, "The Argument from Queerness," from *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*

The opening line of Mackie's book is: "There are no objective values." With this sort of opening, it is difficult to miss that Mackie is a moral nihilist. More specifically, he defends an error theory. He agrees that (i) moral statements are either true or false and (ii) humans can generally know the truth values of these claims, so he is a cognitivist. But Mackie also argues that (iv) all moral claims are false.

Mackie's argument is largely negative; that is, he simply rejects objective moral truths on the grounds that it is not at all obvious how to explain them. He divides his argument into two parts, what he calls the "metaphysical" and the "epistemological." We can reformulate the metaphysical part as follows:

1. If there were objective moral values, they would be very strange, non-natural entities (different from everything else in the universe, for example, Plato's Forms).
2. We do not have evidence for any objects beyond natural entities, that is, entities we can perceive with our five senses, either directly or indirectly.

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3. Therefore, it is unlikely that there are any non-natural entities.

This is an inductive argument (that is, the premises grant a certain amount of probability to the conclusion's truth). If there is no way to talk about moral truths without invoking supernatural language about objects not available to our senses, Mackie concludes that moral language must be like talk about vampires – interesting, but false.

We can reformulate the epistemological part like this:

1. If there are non-natural, objective moral values and we know about them, we need to explain some very special faculty for perceiving them.
2. The most plausible candidate for this special faculty is "moral intuition."
3. Moral intuition is implausible (for reasons Mackie does not specify).

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4. Therefore, it is implausible to think we can know anything about non-natural entities.

This is also an inductive argument. Here, Mackie argues that, even if there were some mysterious, non-natural objects, we would need some access to them in order to make true claims about them. But what sort of access might this be? Some philosophers suggested we have a faculty of "moral intuition," something similar to our intuitions about mathematics (isn't it "obvious" that $2 + 2 = 4$?) and physics (when you see something flying at your head, you duck – even if you don't know what it is). But moral intuition has a bad reputation and, though it is gaining acceptance again in the philosophical literature, it had a particularly bad reputation when Mackie wrote *Ethics*. So, if the truth of moral claims is not available to our five senses (directly or indirectly) and moral intuition is incomprehensible, then it is plausible that our moral claims are not about anything in reality – they are false.

One of the most underrated responses to arguments like Mackie's comes from the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C. S. Lewis (1898–1963). Lewis was academically trained as a literary critic and medievalist, but he was also a self-taught philosopher. It is likely that Lewis's argument is

overlooked because it predates Mackie, but it could also be because it forms part of a larger, non-academic work on the nature of Christianity. Whatever the reason, we decided to include it here because it is a clear, concise response to error theory.

THE CASE FOR REALISM

C. S. Lewis, from *Mere Christianity*

Lewis begins by pointing out (1) that humans acknowledge a fairly uniform set of moral claims, and (2) that there is an obvious sense in which humans do not act morally. These are empirical claims, and Lewis offers some examples in support of them. Interestingly, Mackie and Lewis would probably agree at this point – there is some set of claims that humans roughly agree on and which are supposed to serve as a moral guide for our behavior, but which humans regularly ignore. The disagreement comes in the explanations for (1) and (2).

The first step in Lewis's explanation is to show that, by and large, people are not emotivists – they don't believe they are talking about preferences when they make moral claims. He points out that, in response to moral claims, the other person rarely says, "To hell with your standard." This latter sort of response would be perfectly appropriate if I told you, "You shouldn't prefer chocolate ice cream." You might be right to respond, "To hell with *your* preferences! *I* prefer chocolate." According to Lewis, "It looks, in fact, very much as if both parties had in mind some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behavior or morality or whatever you like to call it, about which they really agreed" (1996: 18). Again, since Mackie is not an emotivist, he and Lewis would agree that, when people are speaking morally, they mean something about objective reality. Of course, for Mackie, this is like children talking about Santa Claus.

Next, Lewis responds to Mackie-like arguments. If language about objective morality is not true, then what could explain the power that moral claims seem to have over us? In chapter 10 of his book, "Patterns of objectification," Mackie hints at a possible explanation:

> Moral attitudes themselves are at least partially social in origin: socially established – and socially necessary – patterns of behavior put pressure on individuals, and each individual tends to internalize these pressures and to join in requiring these patterns of behavior of himself and of others. The attitudes that are objectified into moral values have indeed an external source,

> though not the one assigned to them by the belief in their absolute authority. . . . We need morality to regulate interpersonal relationships, to control some of the ways in which people behave towards one another. (1977: 42–3)

The earlier quotes from Ruse and Wilson expand on this theme in evolutionary terms. Biologically, humans function better if they think they are obeying objective moral rules.

But Lewis gives three reasons for thinking this sort of response is not sufficient. Keep in mind that Lewis is responding to error theory in terms of the most up-to-date psychology of his day, which includes motivation from "herd instincts" (desires to follow the crowd) and "instincts of self-preservation" (desires to protect yourself). However, simply substitute any contemporary evolutionary psychology terminology (e.g., selective behavior, fitness, optimal functioning, etc.) and the point is the same.

First, we are able to distinguish our biological tendencies from our moral code:

> Supposing you hear a cry for help from a man in danger. You will probably feel two desires – one a desire to give help (due to your herd instinct), the other a desire to keep out of danger (due to the instinct for self-preservation). But you will find inside you, in addition to these two impulses, a third thing which tells you that you ought to follow the impulse to help, and suppress the impulse to run away. (Lewis 1996: 22–3)

What is it that arbitrates these two psychological tendencies? If you respond that it is simply another instinct, you've missed the point. Something tells you that one instinct is *better* than another. But if it is simply another instinct, it could not play this sort of authoritative role. "You might as well say that the sheet of music which tells you, at a given moment, to play one note on the piano and not another, it itself one of the notes on the keyboard" (1996: 23).

Second, if all you experience are biological tendencies, then when you experience such a conflict of motivation, the stronger of the two should prevail. But it is at these times that the moral law seems to be telling you to choose the weaker of the two desires. "You probably *want* to be safe much more than you want to help the man drowning: but the Moral Law tells you to help him all the same" (1996: 23). Therefore, there is something over and above these basic motivations.

Third, if all you experience are biological tendencies, then we should be able to pick out the "good" ones from the "bad" ones, so that we have an explanation for why we sometimes feel led to choose one desire over another, especially a weaker desire. However, morality is not like this; for any particular

action, we can think of a time when it is morally permissible and morally impermissible. "There are also occasions on which a mother's love for her own children or a man's love for his own country have to be suppressed or they will lead to unfairness towards other people's children or countries. Strictly speaking, there are no such things as good and bad impulses" (1996: 24). Therefore, there is something over and above these tendencies that gives them the designation "right" or "wrong" in a particular context.

To sum up the argument to this point: we all feel a very strong weight of responsibility with respect to how we act toward ourselves, toward others, and toward the world. We identify this sense of responsibility as the force of the claims of morality. These claims could have subjective value (non-cognitivism) or they could be objectively true or false (cognitivism). There are reasons for thinking they are not simply subjectively valuable, and Mackie and Lewis would probably agree on these. Then, in response to philosophers like Mackie, Lewis offers three reasons for thinking they are objectively true: (a) we can distinguish biological tendencies from moral obligations; (b) something arbitrates our biological tendencies, often in favor of the weaker ones; (c) biological tendencies are not intrinsically good or bad, and so must get this quality from somewhere else. Lewis concludes, "Consequently, this Rule of Right and Wrong . . . or whatever you call it, must somehow or other be a real thing – a thing that is really there, not made up by ourselves. . . . It begins to look as if we shall have to admit that there is more than one kind of reality" (1996: 30).

Notice that this argument does not take the thrust out of Mackie's argument. Lewis has not offered a way to account for non-natural entities or moral intuitions. He simply offers an argument for the falsity of Mackie's conclusion. Recall that it is the very existence of a different kind of reality that leads Mackie to reject moral realism. Lewis is, in effect, saying, "However strange non-natural reality might be, there is more evidence that it exists than that it doesn't." We're reminded of the famous Sherlock Holmes line, "[W]hen you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth" (Doyle 2010: 54).

CASE STUDY: *The Office* (UK), "Work Experience," series 1

AVAILABILITY: NetFlix, iTunes

David Brent (Ricky Gervais), regional manager of the paper company Wernam-Hogg, has been trying to convince his staff there will be no

redundancies (British for "layoffs"), though corporate executives have told him that one branch of the company is closing. He says: "I said there's not going to be redundancies and *that becomes gospel* – absolute trust." He lies about the possibility of their branch closing and gets offended when his honesty is challenged. What's more, instead of attempting to find ways of saving the company money and thereby increasing the likelihood that his branch won't be closed, Brent hires another part-time worker, Donna (Sally Bretton), as a favor to Donna's parents. Donna immediately becomes the object of all manner of sexual harassment. David pretends to play the protective uncle figure only to find out later that Donna enjoys the lewd attention and is a bit of a slut.

While he's introducing Donna around, David discovers an email depicting him as a woman in a sex act; he directs Gareth Keenan (Mackenzie Crook), a former soldier in the Territorial Army, to investigate. Gareth, as always, takes his duties much too seriously and begins police-style interrogations in the meeting room.

During the investigation, David's boss pays a visit to ask about his plans to make the branch more efficient. David lies to her about the changes he's made, about laying off an employee, and pretends he's making a call to fire another employee. Painfully, all his deceptions are uncovered, making Brent look more and more like a fool.

When it turns out that the inappropriate picture was created not by one of the office employees, but by Chris Finch (Ralph Ineson) – company representative and David's lewd friend – David suddenly changes his attitude toward the picture and evades allegations of favoritism.

Commentary: David Brent, the ultimate antihero

David Brent is one of the most amoral characters on television, alongside Basil Fawlty (John Cleese) and the gals from *Absolutely Fabulous* (is it a British thing?). There is so much deceit and pretense in "Work Experience" that many viewers are likely to double-check their own moral characters, asking themselves, "Why do I like this so much?"

How does this episode illuminate moral nihilism? If you watched the episode, it is likely that you felt a pang of embarrassment or discomfort as David Brent's lies were uncovered, one by one. If so, then you share a moral intuition with your fellow humans that there are ways you should not behave. Given this widespread attitude, we are challenged to give an explanation for it. This episode challenges us to consider which explanation best accounts for our embarrassment for David – Mackie's or Lewis's.

If Mackie, Ruse and Wilson, and other error theorists are right that there are no objective values, we have to accept the fact that Brent's apparently immoral behavior is nothing more than an aberrant result of millions of years of environmental pressures. There is nothing *really wrong* with his behavior at all; we simply *regard it* as wrong because it has been more useful to humans in the past to do so.

On the other hand, if Lewis, Kant, Mill, and other realists are right that there are some objective values, then it becomes clear that Brent is really acting immorally in being so deceitful and irresponsible in his position as manager. He should have known better and should be held responsible for his actions.

If your intuitions about this episode make it really difficult for you to believe Mackie's account of value – that is, if there is something either in the phenomenology of moral intuitions or in the role that moral claims play in our language that error theory cannot account for – then your intuitions constitute a *counterexample* to error theory. As we explained in "The Pilot Episode," a counterexample is an argument that constitutes a reason not to accept a claim or theory.

If you don't share this intuition, you probably have difficulty engaging in moral debates. It is likely that arguments about values do not carry much weight with you. If this is true of you, we don't know of any argument that could change your mind. We could offer example after example in an attempt to prime your intuition, but if you don't have it, you don't, and this might make ethics difficult for you to study. Keep in mind, however, that most ethicists throughout history do share this intuition and that the aim of this book is to introduce the major accounts of how various ethical realists explain what makes a moral claim true and how to apply those explanations to a variety of real-world moral decisions.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. If you asked David Brent about his moral theory (and he knew enough to answer intelligently), do you think he would say he's a moral nihilist? Why or why not?
2. Do you think someone who holds an error theory about ethics can live a "moral" life? Explain your answer.
3. C. S. Lewis was a Christian and he ultimately argues that the most plausible explanation for how humans could have access to moral truths is that God shares them with us. Do you have to be religious to accept Lewis's arguments for moral realism?

4. List three other characters from television, movies, or books who seem amoral; that is, they seem to lack any concern for whether an act should or shouldn't be done. Explain why you chose each.
5. Do you find "non-natural" entities a problem for moral theories? If so, do you also find it difficult to accept scientific entities we have never experienced, such as dark matter, gluons, super strings, and gravity? If not, do you also think that paranormal activity, such as remote viewing, astrology, or Tarot cards, could have a place in the scientific community? Explain your answers.

ALTERNATIVE CASE STUDIES

1. *Absolutely Fabulous*, "Poor," series 2
   (Are Edina and Patsy moral nihilists?)
2. *Californication*, "Pilot," season 1
   (Does Hank have any moral intuitions?)
3. *The Office* (UK, "Judgment," series 1
   (Is David's lying immoral or simply irritating?)