

This essay will focus on Sharon Street's metaethical theory of constructivism. Constructivism prides itself on offering a better response to metaethical questions than the responses of other rival metaethical views such as realist, error, and expressivist theories. Bloomfield characterizes the differences in these theories as follows, "realists hold moral truth to be determined by mind-independent reality; expressivists think that the nature of morality is exhausted by the expression of (non-cognitive or quasi-cognitive) attitude; constructivists hold that moral facts are constructed by personal or social choice; and error theorists think that our pre-philosophical concept of *morality* is shot through with error"¹. Street distinguishes constructivism from these views in that constructivism affirms that moral judgements can be correct if they can withstand a reflective scrutiny (a particular procedure) from one's practical standpoint (or that which one considers valuable). The practical standpoint is that which gives or legislates normative judgments as correct or incorrect. For example, if someone claims that they are married and additionally claim that they have no spouse then one of these claims cannot be true since one claim implies the other. This example helps to demonstrate the procedure for withstanding scrutiny when testing one's normative judgments.² Throughout several articles, Street provides a clear presentation of constructivism. One can readily articulate her claims and the method she uses to answer key metaethical concerns. This however, enables her work to be easily critiqued as one can identify numerous worrying problems when examining the consequences of her conclusions. This essay will briefly examine Street's view of constructivism and show how the necessary outcomes of this view lead towards an objectionable relativism. Street cannot avoid this problem of radical relativism and I will demonstrate why constructivism fails as a tenable metaethical view due to this flaw.

In an essay entitled, "What is constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics", Street asserts that constructivism's slogan can be summarized as "no normative truth independent of the practical point of view"^{3,4} Thus, there is no normative truth which exists apart from someone being able to scrutinize (or reflect and reason on their normative judgments) and articulate truth. Street clarifies the phrase "practical point of view" by saying:

"When a creature values something—or, as I will also put it, when he or she *takes* or *judges* this, that or the other things to be valuable—he or she occupies what we may call for convenience *the practical point of view*. More broadly, we may say, the *practical point of view* is the point of view occupied by any creature who takes at least some things in the world to be good or bad, better or worse, required or optional, worthy or worthless, and so on—the standpoint of a being who judges, whether at a reflective or unreflective level, that some things call for, demand, or provide reasons for others. The claim is that we have an understanding of this attitude even if we do not yet understand what value itself is"⁵.

Street's version of constructivism is distinct from other versions of constructivism in that it relates the judgement of value to one creature (or individual) rather than to a group of spectators who together judge something to be right or wrong. Additionally, her version of constructivism does not affirm that moral truth⁶ exists outside of oneself or, in other words, mind-independent. Rather truth is dependent on each individual to assess truth claims for himself. For example, Christianity assumes that God dictates what is right and wrong. This view shows that truth is independent of one's mind since God created it. Mind dependent advocates claim that no one

other than the individual can create truth claims for that individual since truth is dependent on their mind. Street elaborates on this premise by explaining the entailment of mind-dependent judgments. She says:

“Quite apart from whether we think a given set of values is *correct* [...] Indeed, even if we aren’t clear yet on what it *is* for a set of values to be correct—we can nevertheless think about and discuss what *follows*, as a purely logical and instrumental matter from a given set of values in combination with the non-normative facts”⁷.

In other words, even if one is unaware of the accuracy of an individual’s values their specific conclusion *can be* logically entailed from the given values they have claimed. Street uses the example of a girl named Ann who has assumed (wrongly) that it is the highest value to count blades of grass, thus (from the reasoning of her evaluative point of view) she has a logical cause to purchase a calculator. She notes that this logical entailment of buying a calculator is true for Ann even if she does not realize that this is what follows from her assumptions. Street suggests that perhaps Anne is unaware of the non-normative facts of buying a calculator or displays a cognitive deficiency in that she has forgotten the purpose of calculators. Nevertheless, Ann is entitled to purchase a calculator as it is entailed from her evaluative standpoint. Entailment importantly relates to the main premise of constructivism in that it shows what is constituted in the process of valuing. Valuing is not merely one’s beliefs and desires but involves using the “rules of practical reasoning” and explanatory philosophical investigation without a commitment to deduce normative notions.⁸ Thus to summarise this explanation, constructivism is loosely defined within the claim, “Normative truth consists in what is entailed from within the practical point of view”⁹. The procedure for making ethical claims within constructivism requires placing value on specific objects and ideas from within the practical perspective of an individual. Street uses this starting point to expand upon her personal theory of constructivism.

There are various advocates within constructivism. Street specifically defends her view of constructivism with the claim that normative truth comes from what is entailed within a *formal characterization* of the practical point of view and argues this from a Humean metaethical construction.¹⁰ By *formal* characterization, Street clarifies that one does not depend on substantive values but gives an account for the process of valuing. By Humean metaethical constructivism, Street claims that substantive values come primarily from the evaluative starting points of the valuing agent and is not committed to any other substantive claims outside of his own standpoint.¹¹ One may question the importance of distinguishing her view amongst other constructivist views.¹² Street argues that a clear distinction of the views within constructivism is likely to win more converts towards her metaethical view than the shortcomings of what other constructivist positions have to offer towards this end. These problems mainly concern a less plausible procedure for accounting for value than that of the Street’s view. She clarifies her distinctiveness within constructivism through several claims. One of her main claim states:

“If one accepts metaethical constructivism, then one is an antirealist about value in an important and traditional sense, holding that value is an *attitude-dependent* property. One regards the attitude of valuing as the more fundamental explanatory notion, and understands value itself as a “construction” of that attitude. According to metaethical constructivists, things are valuable ultimately because we value them, and not the other way around”¹³.

By this Street demonstrates that metaethical constructivists differ from other types of constructivist claims as it gives an explanation for what it means to value (or gives a procedure for how to value) any normative claim. Other theories of constructivism limit this definition by placing restrictions on normative claims of value. Humean constructivists maintain that there is not universalism in regards to moral reasons, but that each individual asserts value from their specific evaluative starting points. Thus, one is not committed to any substantive (or objective) claims of values. If specific value claims are shared by numerous individuals, this is due to their shared circumstances and similar evaluative starting points. From this, one must discern how constructivism is set apart from the realist claims of objectivity.¹⁴ An important distinction of metaethical constructivism regards the area of objectivity. This concerns the subject field wherein one can get things wrong about normative truth. Objectivity is distinct from subjective views in that it does not derive value claims from a specific individual or group but exists independently of humanity's influence. Street claims that a person does not have to posit anything out of the mind in order to arrive at incorrect normative truth. Her view does not commit one to any realist claims of objectivity. A realist of objectivity asserts that mind-independence is what enables error for normative truth claims.

Street offers various key distinctions on how metaethical constructivism differs from a realism of objectivity. She notes that realism¹⁵ is identified by three main claims: that it is cognitive (accounts that a proposition can be true or false), that some propositions can be true, and that truth is mind-independent. As mentioned earlier, the constructivist¹⁶ perspective identifies itself with a subjective procedure for value and establishes truth as mind-dependent. This position occupies an antirealist perspective of truth. Realists differ from constructivists in their assumption of a hierarchy of value (normative facts are of more value than one's evaluative judgments). Constructivists do not affirm any normative truths and place sole value on one's evaluative judgments.¹⁷ For example, if Caligula¹⁸ were to reason from his evaluative starting points that it was sensible to torture children, constructivists would not object that he is making any mistake from what logically follows from his evaluative standpoint. Realists however argue that though Caligula's evaluative starting points might direct him towards torturing children, he is mistaken if he fails to acknowledge the normative truth which directs him against torturing innocent individuals. Both the realist and antirealist agree to the possibility for an existence of a Caligula type figure that could realistically have evaluative judgments which affirm the torture of children. Street shows that the constructivist position merits consideration as a plausible metaethical view with specifically with regards to mind-dependence.

From this brief synopsis of Street's version of constructivism and her comparison with realism one can observe seemingly credible nature of her view. The problem with Street's view of constructivism lies in its objectionable relative qualities for determining value and does not accurately show that the consequences of her view are more superior to any other metaethical views. In order to understand this problem clearly, a proper clarification of relativity must be discussed. There are many scenarios of relativity that most people permit as agreeable. This might include an agent relativity in which there are differences of opinion in taste, preference, or style (i.e. one person likes vanilla and another person prefers chocolate). This essay will seek to focus on what is labelled objectionable relativity wherein moral claims are likened to one's preferences. This might amount to one person admitting that murder is wrong and then going out to shoot someone. It is this type of relativity which Street seems to imply from the conclusions of her claims. If value is located from the practical perspective of each individual this implies that

there could be as many different value systems as are different valuing creatures that exist (or have existed).

In her essay, *Objectivity and Truth, You'd Better Re-think It* Street responds to Ronald Dworkin with five reasons why the constructivist position (in regards to the Caligula example in particular) is a more reasonable position than that of realism. This example is noteworthy to discuss for considering constructivism as a tenable metaethical view since Caligula demonstrates the relativity that constructivism can display. Namely, if constructivism embraces that a Caligula-like figure can hold a valid and logical view of torturing children *and* live within a society that says his views are right for himself, then it is unlikely that anyone will affirm constructivism as a first choice view for enabling the relative value of someone who tortures children while at the same time upholding value for someone who does not. The example of Caligula is significantly characterized as an ideally coherent eccentric (also called ICEs). These characters are “purely hypothetical, and they’re distinguished by two main features. First, they accept some value that is utterly unheard of, morally repugnant, or both. Second, their acceptance of this value coheres perfectly, as a logical and instrumental matter, with all of their other values in combination with the non-normative facts”¹⁹. These examples enable proponents of metaethical views to demonstrate the security (or lack thereof) of their position by properly responding to these hypothetical dilemmas. ICEs show that “there are some values and desires such that even if an agent is entirely internally consistent in holding them and is making no mistakes whatsoever about the non-normative facts, that agent is nevertheless making a *normative mistake* in the sense that he or she is valuing something that is not in fact valuable, or desiring something that is not in fact desirable”²⁰. As such, ICEs enable one to evaluate whether which metaethical view best accounts for the dilemmas presented within these hypothetical scenarios. Through observing the example of ideally coherent Caligula and an ideally coherent anorexic one can identify that the implications of Street’s conclusions involve an objectionable relativism.²¹

Street defends her view of constructivism through the ideally coherent Caligula as follows, “First, it is important to note that on a Humean antirealist view, in order for an agent to have no reason not to torture children for fun, strict conditions will have to be met; roughly, it will have to be the case that an ideally coherent and fully informed version of herself would judge that she has no reason not to torture children for fun”²². She adds that the likelihood of such a Caligula figure affirming this, from a current realistic view of human nature, is also extraordinarily rare. Second, “If we imagine in full, vivid detail what such a person would have to look like, the view that such a person *would* have reason to torture others becomes intuitively much more plausible”²³. In other words, if Caligula were to meet one of us to explain his reasons, one can assume that he would be much more understandable in his defence towards torturing children than this scenario grants him. Third, “Since no real life human being is anywhere close to ideally coherent, in speaking to others who disagree with us on matters such as torture, we should always proceed on the assumption that there *is* a shared fund of evaluative starting points such that it follows from our interlocutor’s own judgments too that he or she never would have reason to torture a child for fun”²⁴. Thus far within humanity, man has yet to discover someone who is both coherent *and* affirms a value of torturing children for fun. As such, there is no reason to avoid assuming the case that mankind shares an evaluative starting point in which there is no reason to torture children. Fourth, “even if it’s true that a person has *reasons* that are repugnant to us, there are still plenty of other things we can say about this

person—for instance that he is despicable to us, and that it's sad, from our point of view, that he and his reasons are like this"²⁵. That is if one encounters a realistic Caligula, there is no metaethical reasoning requiring one to agree and affirm with his conclusions; rather one should disapprove of him and his evaluative standpoints. Finally, "it must be emphasized that when and if we ever encountered such a person, the rest of us would have every reason to try to change him if we could"²⁶. She likens this to being faced with an alien who seems intelligent with the intent of eating humans. Simply because an alien might presumably be intelligent does not justify one from attacking them from their destructive objective.²⁷ These defences lead one to question whether Street aptly accounts for the relative nature of constructivism.

One question involves how Street can respond to real-life ethical systems which comprise a gathered view of value (such as government and politics) outside of her defence for an individual view of value. Street's view purports that if one deems something to be valuable (from their practical perspective), then for them it logically entails truth. She has clarified that though a figure like Caligula has rational reasons to torture children, this does not entail that one has to affirm those reasons. However, if Street's main premise is that each individual has the ability to proclaim what is of value and what is not of value then why would any person (namely someone of government/police force) other than Caligula have a reason to object to Caligula's logical conclusions of his practical perspective of value? Further, what does it mean for a society to agree to what is valuable and what is not valuable if the source for value is located within each individual? Street clarifies that it is normal for a majority of individuals to share in coming to similar conclusions of value but this is problematic for individuals who oppose the majority view as they still obtain a legitimate value claims. That is, if a society is to use a majority view as an ethical system when even one individual opposes this view (due to their practical point of view) he must still be acknowledged as purporting a valid system of values. This is problematic scenario for the society as validating this individual encourages his values and makes it problematic for enforcing punishment. How is a society supposed to validate an individual's values and then send them to jail because they are in opposition to the society's values? Street does not account for this type of problematic scenario. The following section will show how Street's responses to the Caligula example are unable to account for the objectionable relativity apparent within her view.

In her first objection, Street says that it is very rare that a Caligula type figure would exist in real life because no one who is both ideally coherent and fully informed would consider torturing children to be valuable. However, what does Street mean by "fully informed"? Is she saying that Caligula would need to know everything before she can value if something is right or wrong? If this is the case it assumes that no one would ever be able to value anything to be right or wrong as it is not feasible to know everything. Street does not further clarify her meaning and thus this objection does not seem helpful towards promoting constructivism.

In her second objection, Street asserts that if one fully understood Caligula's reasons (as opposed to talking about them hypothetically) his defence for torturing children would seem much more plausible by speaking with him personally. This point seems to communicate that one should (and would possibly want to) accept an opposite view of value if they were exposed to all of Caligula's reasons for choosing to torture children. Though this seems tenable, it does not address how to handle the relativity of constructivism (i.e. Caligula's opposing view of torturing children from a majority view which opposes the torture of children) but rather

demonstrates that one might be inclined to favour relativity. Thus if one understood Caligula's reasons and favoured them in addition to favouring their own views then Street would have succeeded in demonstrating that it is acceptable to have more than one view of value.

In her third point, Street clarifies that since humanity has yet to observe a Caligula type figure who is both coherent *and* affirms the torture of children, then one should proceed assuming that there are specific shared evaluative starting points. The problem with this assumption is that it eliminates allowing constructivism to have any further advantage over other metaethical views. For example, if constructivists can assume shared evaluative starting points along with their main claim, then how does constructivism show any improvement to metaethical theories if one can also grant that realism (for example) can assume that there are values which exist independent of our minds? The answer is that it cannot. This is damaging to constructivism since it shows that in order for constructivism to thrive as a metaethical theory it must adopt the advantages of other metaethical theories which inevitably leads to constructivism's advocates dismissing this view in favour of other metaethical views.

In her fourth attempt to disprove that Caligula is a threat to constructivism, Street replies by asserting that no one is required to agree with Caligula's views of value and that one can criticism him for his sad views of torturing children. Notably, she does *not* mention that his values are wrong if they come from his practical perspective. This is the problem with the objectionable relative nature of constructivism. If one disagrees with Caligula, he can shun him or try to convince him that his reasons are repugnant, but ultimately if Caligula's views of value come from his practical perspective, then it is logical and valid for him to hold to these views whether or not the majority of others affirm the opposite of his choice of value. The concept of wrong is pragmatically important to mankind for societal relations. Constructivism forces one to lose this notion by accepting the relative claims of constructivism.

Street's final argument mentions that one is entitled to steer a Caligula in a different direction from their intended destructive aim (whether by intellectual reasoning or by physical force) and likens this to an example of intelligent destructive aliens. This example implies that for those who hold constructivism, inevitably there will be a conflict of value systems (among differing individuals) and at worst there will sometimes be destructive confrontations over these conflicts. Street shows that there is some intuitive sense (or evaluative starting point) which convinces her that an alien eating her is wrong, hence her reasoning for wanting to attack the alien. Since the alien is a valuing creature with a logical and valid (namely, it stems from his practical perspective) value of killing humans, constructivists must face that its view promotes a conflict of value (as there are as many possibilities of conflict of value as there are valuing creatures who exist).

This last argument from Street presents a valid response for constructivism, but how does it enable her view to withstand the positive aspects of other metaethical views when faced with a similar scenario? A realist view of objectivity positively offers the claim that there are normative truths (values which are right or wrong) of which humanity is subject. Pragmatically, it seems that a realistic view of objectivity would work better for stopping crime. Constructivism seems to enable Caligula type figures to boldly state their destructive values and possibly follow through in their actions. If mankind thoroughly adopted a constructivist position, it seems that one would see more Caligula type figures emerging than fewer. Constructivism presents no opposition

to one sharing their personal evaluative starting points and sees these starting points as valid for each individual. Realism however entails a negative peer pressure on those who resemble similar features to Caligula. It forces them to suppress their destructive evaluative starting points by affirming that there is not a normative truth that allows for the destruction of children. Realism also enables a means for punishment as it affirms that when specific objective claim are disobeyed then these individuals must face consequences. Constructivism can offer means for punishment, but it is illogical to punish an individual for their views which are affirmed as valid.

Another ICE example will help to demonstrate the objectionable relativity implied within the consequences of Street's view. The ideally coherent anorexic²⁸ is described by Allan Gibbard in Street's essay as one who "accepts norms that prescribe death by starvation, if the alternative is a figure plump enough to sustain life," and she is stipulated to be entirely coherent in doing so, such that she is making no mistakes whatsoever about the non-normative facts and 'the norms she accepts tell her to starve, and the higher order norms she accepts tell her to accept those lower order norms'"²⁹. The key to this example is difference of opinion: the anorexic may think she is acting correctly, but no one else affirms her choice to starve herself to death in order to maintain her skinny form. This example attacks Street's view in that it shows that if one creates normative reasons from the practical point of view (referred specifically as attitude dependent conceptions), presumably she could have a reason to justify her death by a trivial pursuit such as a trim figure. Street clarifies two key aims regarding her attempts to present a credible case for attitude dependent conceptions. First, there is not a realistic human being who would be an ideally coherent anorexic, thus "attitude-dependent conceptions of normative reasons therefore have nothing to fear from our intuitions about real-life people"³⁰. Street distinguishes attitude dependent conceptions as the idea that an agent's evaluative attitudes are those which give reason for one to live (there are not any facts regarding their life outside of one's standpoint). This is contrasted by attitude independent conceptions of normative reasons. This is the claim that independent of one's evaluative attitudes there are normative facts which entail how one should live their life. Street uses this terminology in her first claim to demonstrate the hypothetical nature of this ICE example in contrast with a person in reality. She clarifies that correlating a hypothetical example with real-life intuitions is not enabling the true nature of attitude dependent conceptions of normative reasons. She explains that this example is distinct from a real-life anorexic in that the ideally coherent anorexic is *not* prompted by the idea of how beautiful others may think she will be when she is thin or how much people will love her better. The ideally coherent anorexic does not care about the affections of people or desires to attain beauty; she is solely obsessed with the goal to become thin. Street defends her view from the attack of the ideally coherent anorexic by saying, "On the contrary, the attitude-dependent conception will imply that any real-life woman who ever thought this would be making a terrible mistake on her own terms"³¹. She notes that since it is impossible that any real-life woman would possibly consider this pursuit from an attitude dependent conception of human reasons it is better to relate to this case of an ideally coherent anorexic as an alien creature than as a human. Thus one need not worry about the threat that the ideally coherent anorexic has towards the plausibility of attitude dependent coherence as it would not suffice towards a real-life human when properly considering these intuitions.

Her next claim in defence of attitude dependent coherence states, "Second, if we take the time to imagine clearly what a genuinely ideally coherent anorexic would look like, it becomes

intuitively plausible that she would have most normative reason to starve herself to death for the sake of a trim figure; attitude-dependent conceptions of normative reasons therefore do a good job of capturing our intuitions about these cases too”³². Street premises her clarification by commenting that in these ICE examples, no human being is being referenced with regard to these hypothetical scenarios. The anorexic in this hypothetical case has been freed from the higher normative commitments that would inform her that this is a silly and fruitless pursuit. If this is the pursuit (starving herself to death) her attitude dependent conception of normative reasons has led her to obtain, then Street boldly affirms her choice to follow her normative reasons. She justifies that the anorexic is akin to a mountain climber who risks his life to reach the peak of the mountain top knowing full well before climbing that he will likely die in the storm on his descent. When one has full knowledge of the outcome of his decision towards death and is still passionate towards its pursuit, Street states that the natural reply is to respond, “Whatever floats your boat”³³. In other words, if the hypothetical anorexic has determinedly made up her mind regarding her normative reasons, what is one to do but to consent to these strong desires (very similarly to the way one would consent to a mountain climber risking his life to climb a dangerous mountain)? Thus she concludes that this ICE is not a worry for attitude dependent conception of normative reasons because as the anorexic displayed inconsistencies in her “deeply held values” so one can see this mistake happen in real life human intuitions which betrays their “normative commonsense”³⁴.³⁵

Street’s attempts to satiate the problems of an objectionable relativity within the example of an ideally coherent anorexic are not satisfactory for her desire to promote a plausible case for attitude dependent conception of normative reasons. In her first claim Street asserts that all women have the same values such that they would not kill themselves for the pursuit of a thin figure. She says, “[...] that *any* [emphasis mine] real-life woman who ever thought this would be making a terrible mistake on her own terms”³⁶. This is clarified her claim that this ICE example is only a hypothetical case and real life humans share the same values in common such that they would not pursue silly normative values which would involve death. This claim of objectivity she uses is not the claim of attitude dependent conceptions of normative reasons but a claim of the realist of objectivity. Namely, that there are objective claims of which all mankind are subject. Street invalidly associates this claim with attitude dependent conceptions of normative reasons in order to demolish the attacks of relativity associated with the ideally coherent anorexic. Thus one can see that her view still remains worrisome (since she did not address how to solve these problems) and further validates the attitude independent conception of normative reasons (or realist view of objectivity) claim for metaethics.

In her second claim Street takes an extremely bold stance by validating one’s outlandish normative reasons (namely starving oneself as a primary aim) that lead to death. She tries to ease the objectionable relative nature of attitude dependent conceptions by comparing the values an anorexic shares with a mountain climber’s values. The problem lies within this comparison. Street’s view does not ease one’s comforts regarding the problems of relativity, but commits one to the objectionable relativity that man wants to avoid. Rather than claiming that attitude dependent conceptions of normative reasons do not commit one to validating outlandish ideas such as starving oneself to death (namely due to their own attitude dependent conception) she instead affirms this claim and proceeds to show that it is justifiable through affirming the possibility of death within another scenario (mountain climbing). Realists of objectivity offer a

view that demonstrates that there is an objective value which shows that it is wrong to pursue death for trivial reasons (namely starving oneself). Street claims that it is wrong to pursue death for impractical reasons (displayed through her previous defence) *and* it is feasible for certain individuals to pursue death for stupid reasons (due to their attitude dependent conception of normative reasons). Her attempt to liken the pursuits of an anorexic to the pursuits of a mountain climber does not make her view more superior to that of a realist's view of objectivity. Instead it affirms that she accepts the relative nature of normative reasons as long as the individual in such a pursuit has thoroughly convinced himself that it is a right decision. If this is the most that Street can offer in a defence for outlandish normative reasons, then one has need to worry about her dangerous position.

Street's purpose in the examples with the ideally coherent anorexic and the ideally coherent Caligula is to show that attitude dependent conceptions are more intuitive and plausible than those presented by attitude independent conceptions. She asserts that "the plausibility for attitude dependent conceptions of normative reasons is routinely seriously underestimated"³⁷. Through examining these hypothetical cases one can better understand how their practical reasoning evaluates their system of values, the world, and their personal standpoints towards them. Presumably ICEs have committed an error in their reasoning that real-life humans would not commit (such as torturing innocent children or starving oneself to death for the mere sake of a trim form), however Street enables one to re-examine these characters to see if there is error in one's thinking or if these one's thoughts towards these scenarios are more intuitive than originally may account.³⁸

In a commitment to Street's view of constructivism one loses the ability to accurately create value and affirm society's objective values. According to Street an individual must be coherent, and fully informed to create value. A commitment to constructivism thus forces one to define what it means to be fully informed and coherent (as well as who determines these strict conditions) before acquiring epistemic assurance of a value's accuracy. Epistemic assurance of value seems simple to achieve through her procedure, but unrealistic within a society of individuals. For example, if a person has determined a specific value from his practical standpoint (while fully informed and coherent) but is faced with numerous opposing views of value from his peers, then he is likely to question his ethical decisions and why his value claim is superior to these other values. Further, value can constantly change within constructivism since value stems from a changing individual. This would make it difficult to sustain a definition of what is valuable if objects deemed valuable now could be destroyed and lost if they later 'lose' their value due to a new practical standpoint.

Street's view also presents an egocentric nature to mankind. If value is determined by the individual (and the individual alone) then this assumes that an individual is fully capable of discerning right from wrong, good from bad, and what is worthy or unworthy. This claim implies that every man is the ultimate source for ethical discernment. Since man is not perfect, it seems odd to assume that an imperfect individual would be the judge of what is perfect for ethical decision making. This view also forces man to be perfect by requiring him to be fully coherent and informed despite man's natural tendencies to be irrational and inclination to uphold contradicting beliefs. Street must address the individual who does not desire to be fully informed and fully coherent or an individual who is coherent but refuse to be fully informed. Is this individual capable of making value judgments or should these judgments be regarded as

valueless? For example, some coherent individuals who agree to be led by a religious cult might refuse to be fully informed within this sect of judgments. Street must account for whether these people have meaningless values or not.

In response to the initial question of determining moral discussion, beliefs, and actions, Street's presents several premises and a conclusive claim towards resolving metaethical queries. She shows that valuing creatures are those who attribute value to things by saying, "[value] exists and enters the world with them"³⁹. Thus, things do not contain value independent of one valuing them but individuals give value to things from their own practical point of view. If one accepts constructivism, then one is an "anti realist about value...holding that value is an attitude-dependent property"⁴⁰. These propositions come together to make the claim: "Normative truth consists in what is entailed from within the practical point of view"⁴¹. Through the example of an individual who enjoys torturing children and an anorexic who would rather starve than live, Street defends her view from the attacks of objectionable relativism in order to help her readers be comforted by the relativism that is apparent within constructivism. These responses do not accurately respond to sustain constructivism as a tenable position for these metaethical problems because she cannot defend her views from objectionable relativism. Her unsafe view of constructivism forces a commitment to the objectionable relativity that one wants to avoid. Constructivism fails to offer a procedure for creating value due to her strict procedural conditions which require an unrealistic perfection of coherence and information. Her view also fails pragmatically account for how this system of value can survive in a society of differing evaluative standpoints due to her naive and optimistic assumption that destructive conflict will not likely occur. Therefore, in order to find constructivism appealing, Street will have to revise it in order to avoid this objectionable relativism. Otherwise, other metaethical positions will be much more appealing and intuitive.

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¹ Paul Bloomfield, forthcoming *Archimedean Points and Why Metaethics Matters*, 14.

² The explanation of constructivism is taken primarily from Street, “Constructivism About Reasons,” *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, Russ Shafer-Landau, ed. Vol. 3. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), 208-209, 227.

³ Street, “What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics?” *Philosophy Compass* Vol. 4 (2009), 5.

⁴ Street distinguishes her view of constructivism as the practical standpoint characterization apart from the proceduralist characterization. This essay will be examining the former.

⁵ Street, *What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics*, 6.

⁶ When referring to truth and value in this essay, I limit this definition solely to moral/ethical truth and value claims.

⁷ Street, *What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics*, 6.

⁸ The thoughts and ideas of this paragraph are taken from Street, *What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics*, 6-7, 17.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰ This is distinct from other constructivist views such as: Restricted constructivism or Kantian constructivism.

¹¹ The ideas represented concerning *Formal Humean Metaethical Constructivism* are taken from Street, *What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics*, 10-11.

¹² For a further defence of this idea, see Street, “Coming to terms with Contingency- Humean Constructivism about Practical Reason,” *Constructivism in Practical Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, forthcoming), 1. Used with permission.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁴ The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from Street, *What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics*, 10-12.

¹⁵ From this point forward when using the reference to realism or realist, I am referring to a definition which is limited to realist claims of objectivity.

¹⁶ From this point forward in the essay, when referring to constructivism, I will be using the view that Street has articulated and affirmed. Namely, that it is from the *formal Humean characterization* and is metaethical.

¹⁷ Thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from Street, *What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics*, 12-14.

¹⁸ Street uses the example of the sadist, Roman Emperor (who is in favour of torturing people).

¹⁹ Street, “In Defense of Future Tuesday Indifference: Ideally Coherent Eccentrics and the Contingency of What Matters,” *Philosophical Issues*, 2009, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ The thoughts and ideas presented concerning ICEs are taken from Street, “In Defense of Future Tuesday Indifference: Ideally Coherent Eccentrics and the Contingency of What Matters”.

²² Street, *Objectivity and Truth, You’d Better Rethink It*, 34.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from Street, *Objectivity and Truth, You'd Better Rethink It*, 34.

²⁸ Street clarifies an important side note worth considering regarding this example: "To begin with, as is obvious but worth drawing explicit attention to, anorexia nervosa is a serious, real-life illness that is rampant among women in our culture. Appeal to this example therefore risks trading on our intuitions not about the case at hand, which is purely hypothetical, but rather about real-life women. This doesn't mean we can't use the example, but it does mean that we need to move slowly. There is substantial philosophical risk that when we ask ourselves "Would an ideally coherent anorexic have most normative reason to starve herself to death for the

sake of a trim figure?" the character we unthinkingly imagine is much like the women we know from real life, with just a tweak or two. We may even think vaguely of anorexics we have known. And naturally, if we are even implicitly calling to mind the sorts of women we know from real life, we will feel strongly that none of them could ever have normative reason to starve herself to death for the sake of a trim figure; indeed, we bristle at the suggestion, which actually seems quite offensive. None of this, however, tells the least bit against an attitude-dependent conception of normative reasons. For—in a point that is also obvious but often overlooked in practice—if one is going to appeal to intuitions about cases to help decide between attitude-dependent and attitude-independent conceptions of normative reasons, then one is under a strict philosophical obligation to imagine the cases in question accurately; otherwise one's intuitions concerning them are of no relevance to the dispute at hand." (taken from "In Defense of Future Tuesday Indifference: Ideally Coherent Eccentrics and the Contingency of What Matters," 3-4)

²⁹ Street, "In Defense of Future Tuesday Indifference: Ideally Coherent Eccentrics and the Contingency of What Matters," 3.

³⁰ Ibid., 4.

³¹ Ibid., 5.

³² Ibid., 4.

³³ Ibid., 6.

³⁴ Ibid., 7.

³⁵ The thoughts and ideas of the sections involving the ideally coherent anorexic are taken from Street, "In Defense of Future Tuesday Indifference: Ideally Coherent Eccentrics and the Contingency of What Matters".

³⁶ Ibid., 5.

³⁷ Ibid., 3.

³⁸ The thoughts and ideas of with the essay regarding ICEs are primarily taken from Street's article, "In Defense of Future Tuesday Indifference: Ideally Coherent Eccentrics and the Contingency of What Matters".

³⁹ Street, *Coming to terms with Contingency - Humean Constructivism about Practical Reason*, 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Street, *What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics*, 7.