Why Bother With Ethical Theory?

1. Intro: in reverse order:
   a. Why bother with ethics?
   b. Why bother with ethical theory?
   c. What is ethical theory?

2. The difference between normative ethical theory and metaethical theory
   a. Examples of normative: situation ethics, virtue ethics, utilitarianism, aspects of natural law theory and Kant
   b. Examples of metaethics: emotivism, divine command theory and the relation between ethics and religion, intuitionism, prescriptivism, aspects of Kant
   c. Practical ethics as the third branch

3. Why bother with metaethics?
   a. Related to tonight’s talk
   b. What kind of world is this – are there ‘values’ already or do we confer value? If the latter, how free are we in the values we confer – is it a matter of the will or does human nature restrain us? What’s the relationship between God and morality?
   c. Moral psychology: what does morality mean to us as human beings? How is it part of our lives?

4. Why bother with normative theory?
   a. Notice the key concepts at the heart of each normative theory, an intuitive idea of human nature
   b. The desire to know how to decide – practical guidance
   c. The attempt to understand ourselves, to be ‘consistent’, to be thought-ful; the instinct to know and its importance
   d. The point is harder to see without objectivity, but not impossible – the importance of authenticity and integrity
   e. Does this need to be theory? Contentious, e.g. situation ethics, particularism; but these are still theories about theory

5. Why bother with ethics?
   a. Why be moral? Three types of answer:
      i. Response to value: there can be no answer that will satisfy by logic, but this needn’t be a problem – e.g. Kant on reason
      ii. Psychology: what it will do for you as a person
      iii. Living with others: situating yourself in community
   b. Why think about it (i.e. why ethics)? Back to the justification for normative theory