

Introduction to Philosophy

Theory of Value 2

Recapitulation

- Subjectivism is the view that there are no facts of the matter at all to make value statements true or false
- Metaphysical arguments: the only real facts can only be described (**is**, not **ought**) or feature only natural properties
 - But why could there not be other facts, or why could not real facts be described in two ways, as natural and as not-natural?
- Argument from deep disagreement: ethical disagreement cannot be settled in any way, even though one can argue in ethics > is most easily explained if there are no facts of the matter.
- Best argument: for most beliefs, the fact that we have them is explained best by reference to reality being so-and-so; for beliefs about value, however, that does not seem to be the case > the easiest explanation there seems that they are the result of our 'natural responses', our experience, our upbringing.
- All these arguments do point to a difference between normal beliefs and beliefs about value, but they are not enough to argue for subjectivism
 - If subjectivism were correct, there should be deep disagreement about every belief about value > subjectivism cannot explain that there is also deep agreement about some values.
 - Subjectivism cannot explain that it is crucial for beliefs about value that they are shared by at least some group.

Conventionalism

- The core idea of conventionalism is that there are facts about value, but that they are different from facts in science, because they are facts made facts by someone
 - This can easily explain deep disagreement > not necessary to be subjectivist for that reason
 - There are different versions of conventionalism, depending on who does the making: God, a culture/society, or an individual

Divine Command Theory

- Something is good because God/gods make it good
 - Becomes all the more attractive, the more powerful one's concept of a god is: ancient Greek gods were not held to be very powerful, but monotheistic gods, having created the world, can become very powerful
 - The more powerful a god is, the more difficult it is to distinguish between the divine command theory and realism > if a god has created the whole world, then everything is such that it is so because the god made it so.

Criticism of Divine Command Theory

- Criticism of Divine Command Theory assumes that there is a real difference between normal facts and ethical facts
- 1. There are many religions or many gods: are they all creating ethical facts?
- 2. If DCT were true, then the god(s) could have made any value statement true
 - They would have acted without a reason
 - They must have acted without a reason, because if they had had a reason, then the ethical fact would have been there, because of this reason, not because the god(s) would have made it a fact.
 - This argument works against any conventionalist theory.

Ethical Relativism

- Ethical relativism says that values are culture-dependent (not merely situation-dependent)
 - Not in the sense that cultures disagree about values
 - But in the stronger sense that values are there because they are adopted by a culture
- Problems with Ethical relativism:
 1. Same problem as with DCT: cultures could adopt any value – it is completely arbitrary
 2. It leads to conformism: it is impossible to criticize current values
 3. It does not justify the rule that one should not interfere with the values of another culture > why not just eradicate that culture?

Mitigated Ethical Relativism

- It seems possible to adopt a mixed account of value, according to which:
 - there are facts determining for some things what is good
 - For other things such facts are created by society/group

Realism

- How could there be ethical facts without them being the same type of facts as normal facts?
- It is possible to talk about 'good' and 'bad' in a descriptive way:
 - 'This is a bad hammer'
 - 'My left eye is my good eye'
- Here 'good' and 'bad' is related to a **function** > something can be such that it can/cannot perform its function
 - Artefacts have functions because human beings give them a function > created fact
 - Natural things have functions because in evolution these things remained there because of providing an advantage > real fact