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Introduction to Philosophy

Theory of Value 3

Recapitulation I

- Subjectivism claims that there are no facts of the matter in ethics
- There is unresolvable disagreement in ethics, and that can best be explained by subjectivism
- To account for the beliefs of people on value matters, we do not have to appeal to facts about certain action: 'natural responses', upbringing, experience will do
- These arguments do show that value facts either do not exist, or are at least different from 'normal' facts
- Subjectivism cannot explain 'deep agreement'

Recapitulation II

- Conventionalism: there are ethical facts, but they are **made**
- By god(s): Divine Command Theory
- By culture/society: Ethical Relativism
- By individual
- Main problem of Conventionalism: it is arbitrary what kind of values the god(s)/society/the individual adopt (and if it is not arbitrary, then the facts are not made so)

Realism

- In case of an 'obviously good or bad thing' many have the intuition that it is really obvious that it is good or bad > 'Don't you see?!'
> as if there is a fact out there which everybody should see, and as if it is a mistake not to see > 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

Realism II

- Perhaps there are also such facts in the case of ethics > two possibilities would be:
 1. A **society** can only function if there are certain norms > these norms are good, as a fact
 2. An **individual** of a species can only function if it engages in certain types of actions > these actions are good, as a fact
- > Utilitarianism seems to be sympathetic to such a view: being pleasurable can be seen as involving well-functioning

Possible Objections

- Do societies and individuals have functions?
 - Whether a society functions well with certain norms also depends on the circumstances, which might change > do the facts change as well?
 - What would be the function of a human being?
 - *Being alive* seems not enough for ethics
 - *Being rational* seems far too much
 - Should we sometimes not overcome our functions? > for example: eating meat may seem to belong to our well-functioning, but is that good?



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