

# Values and reality



VALUES The question 'Is value a part of the world?' is completely redundant and it is in the nature of objectivity which needs to be altered in perspective.

Values change from

individual to individual, community to community. Values that are cherished by one

individual may not be a guideline for another individual at all. Indeed the values which

underline the character of one community may not be accepted at all by another

community. The concept of values is entirely subjective in nature.

Values are not there in the world for any observer, one without our human interest

in morality. The test for the objectivity of a property is whether it is used in judgements for

which there are developed standards of rational argument and whether they are needed to

explain aspects of our experience that are otherwise inexplicable. John

McDowell thinks

that both these tests of moral properties are in a sense "subjective" but not in a way that

undermines their reality.

The connection between McDowell's general metaphysics and this particular claim about moral properties is that all claims about objectivity are to be made from the

internal perspective of our actual practices. Characterising the place of values in our

worldview is not, in McDowell's view, to downgrade them as less real than talk of quarks or the Higgs boson.

Mackie, In Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong Part I, acknowledges that subjectivism is often thought of as a kind of skepticism. However, he claims that

" subjectivism" is also used to refer to a first order normative view. It is the view that each individual ought to do whatever that individual happens to think he should.

The term

" subjectivism" has also been used to convey different second order views as well.

There are second order linguistic claims about the nature of moral language, of

moral terms and moral judgments. Mackie feels the type of second order subjectivism is

really a report or expression of the subject's feelings or attitudes. He differentiates his

own moral skepticism from this view on two grounds - one that his is a negative claim,

and two, that his thesis is ontological, not linguistic. Mackie observes that there is a

connection between these differing forms of skepticism; Many people get attracted

towards the linguistic type of second order moral skepticism because they already

embrace the negative ontological attitude towards objective value.

Mackie's skeptical claim that there are no objective values is consistent with the

idea that values are subjective in the sense that they are agreed upon or shared. It may

also be that such values can be made universal without being objective. He also

distinguishes between objectivism about values and descriptivism.

Descriptivism is a

view about moral language, according to which, the meanings of moral terms are purely

descriptive. It does not involve evaluative or prescriptive component.

The descriptivist about moral meaning holds that someone can judge an act cruel

without condemning it. Mackie points out that the mainstream European tradition of

moral philosophy since Plato holds that values are objective and also that moral

judgments refer to these values and are essentially motivating or action-guiding. This

mainstream view of moral discourse implies that descriptivism is false because it implies

motivational externalism, whereas the mainstream tradition embraces motivational

internalism.

Mackie observes the objectivity of moral judgments in the sense that they

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can

employ intersubjectively valid standards. Since those standards themselves are not valid

because they reflect in turn objective values, he maintains his fundamental moral

skepticism about the objectivity of values. Value is part of the world and subjectivity is

not distinct from it in the traditional understanding.

Sources -

1. Mind Value and Reality - John Mc Dowell (Harvard 1998)
2. Needs, Values Truth - D. Wiggins (OUP 1998)
3. Ethics : Inventing Right and Wrong Part I