The Problem:

The function is often presented as a necessary condition of value: without function, values cannot exist. This leads to the metaphysical incoherence of value judgments: if value judgments are acts of relating certain objects to one another, and if function is the constitutive property of these objects, then value judgments would be impossible without function. This incoherence is a problem for the metaphysics of values, and it is a problem for the metaphysics of the self.

Self-Knowledge Involves Value Judgments:

It is not sufficient to simply assert that value judgments are acts of relating certain objects to one another. We must also explain why certain objects are related in certain ways. This is the task of ethics. Ethics is the study of the nature of value judgments and the nature of the objects that serve as their subjects.

Value Objectivism:

1. The claim that values are grounded in contingent psychological facts; and
2. The claim that values are grounded in natural properties (e.g. Platonic universals).

The Solution:

The solution to the problem of value objectivism is to recognize the role of consciousness in the production of values. Consciousness is the ability to discriminate between states of being, and it is the basis of our ability to value certain states of being over others.

The Naturalist Account of the Subject is Incoherent:

Taylor launches an attack against naturalism based on the best account of the kind of thing that values are. He argues that values are functions, and that functions are not inherent in the world. This is incoherent, as it is impossible to have a function without an object to which it can be applied.

Value as Function (Walshout's Analysis): Values are properties of relational situations in which two or more entities act to support the function of all.

Incoherent:

1. A function is that act through which the being of a thing is morally realized.
2. Qualitative distinctness is the function. (Walshout's function = Taylor's "constitutive goods").
3. The basic concept of value from which all others implicitly derive their concept values is a complete being.
4. The value of a thing cannot be an entity in the world. Value judgments render the real or "that which completes" the subject's characteristic function as a relational situation. This is a conceptual construct that is not realized.
5. The value of what can complete cannot be being. Value judgments render the real or "that which completes" the subject's characteristic function as a relational situation. This is a conceptual construct that is not realized.
6. An individual being's function can only be realized in "relational situations" that presuppose a naturalistic individual. These situations presuppose a complete being (or "that which completes" a thing) that acts in the world and is complete.
7. Value judgments essentially involve the fact that all value is subjective. Value judgments are incoherent, as they presuppose the concrete nature of value judgments as being. Consciousness may presuppose the determination of a state of being that can fulfill the subject's function.
8. Value judgments presuppose the fact that all value is subjective. Value judgments are incoherent, as they presuppose the concrete nature of value judgments as being. Consciousness may presuppose the determination of a state of being that can fulfill the subject's function.

The "Best Account" Principle and the Challenge for Moral Ontology:

Taylor's "Best Account" Principle states that the concept of value is what value judgments are about. This principle is incoherent, as it is impossible to have a concept of value without an object to which it can be applied.

Objective Value as the Best Explanation of the Intentional Object:

Ed claims that the best explanation of the intentional relation is that it is a function. This is incoherent, as it is impossible to have a function without an object to which it can be applied.

Key Points:

Third-person naturalism lacks the conceptual resources to situate selves, values, and the intentional relation in the world. We can make more progress in explaining — rather than explaining away — the value terms that form part of our starting point if we seek a naturalism that takes seriously Taylor's "Best Account" principle, and gives some priority to the claims of the first-person stance. The first-person perspective is a locus in its own right that cannot be reduced to third-person statements of value-neutral facts. Walshout's Aristotelian concept of value, which straddles the normative and the descriptive, as well as the subjective and the objective domains, can help us explain value nonreductively. It thereby paves the way to the first-person-friendly naturalism.

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References:


