

Central Claims

- There are no objective values → nihilism: neither moral values (goodness, rightness) or aesthetic values (beauty, repulsiveness)

The Methodology

- Mackie's 3 types of questions

1) is X wrong? → normative question: which actions are right or wrong

- different first-order normative ethical views provide answers based on their conception of the good

2) what does 'X is wrong' mean? → second-order semantic question

- the meaning of moral claims → different metaethical theories give different answers

- subjectivist (wrong-for-me), moral relativist (wrong-for-us (culture), naturalist realism (produces pain), non-naturalist realism (refers to a non-natural entity)

↳ Mackie argues non-naturalist realism is correct → our moral claims, judgements or beliefs involve a ~~claim to objectivity~~

3) is there such a thing as wrongness? → second-order ontological question

- whether value-entities exist → do objective values (goodness/wrongness) actually exist?

An ontological thesis

- Mackie argues no objective values exist in the universe

- all affirmative judgements "X is Z" are false bc they include unwarranted claims to objectivity

- non-affirmative judgements "X is not Z" are always true, but in a trivial way

Argument from queerness

- Metaphysical → the nature of X: the nature of things would be peculiar

- Epistemological → how could we know X? : if we were aware of them, it would be by some special faculty or ability

→ the problem doesn't concern the non-natural nature of moral values, but their nature of as "calling for" and "motivating"

1) the nature of objective moral values as "calling for" something → detecting moral good/wrongs by a 6th sense

2) the nature of moral entities are also intrinsically motivating: alter your psychological state so you experience motivation to pursue and avoid things

3) the nature of the purported special faculty detecting objective values

Book notes

- There are no objective values

- moral skepticism/subjectivism: in regard to the objectivity of values, a negative doctrine (explains what there isn't), an ontological thesis

- colors as secondary qualities?

- if one person claims something is wrong, and another that it is not

 - objectivist will say they are contradicting each other + one of the two must be wrong

- descriptivism: meaning of ethical terms are purely descriptive, not even partly prescriptive or emotive or evaluative

- Kant cannot explain how pure reason is practical either

- Sidgwick: if an egoist claims his happiness is objective, a utilitarian can argue that the egoist's happiness is not any more objectively desirable than anyone else's happiness

- referring to moral reasoning/arguments: somewhere in the input of an argument - in the premises or form - there will be something that cannot be objectively validated (some premise that isn't simply true / form that isn't valid as a matter of general logic)