

Desire as Psychological Case against Nihilism and a Clear Mechanism as Evidence for Moral Realism

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Abstract : Nihilism claims that there are no actual intrinsic goods. Desire, however, directly contradicts this claim. To desire, something is more than to be motivated to bring about the desired ends. It is more than to take pleasure in it, seeming that one has obtained her desired end. Desire is, further, more than believing that something is good. Desire is the perception that something is good for the self. In this paper, it is argued that desire is an agent-relative value seeming. This implies that there are intrinsic values. It will be argued that: (1) there are intrinsic values related to life and flourishing, (2) that it is metaphysically impossible that there are no intrinsic values, (3) that desire is our psychological mechanism which enables us to perceive a state of affairs or event as an agent-relative good, and (4) while we can be wrong about the large scale object of desire (i.e., the instrumental desire) we cannot be wrong about what is at the root of our desire (i.e., the intrinsic desire). The method of this paper will be to examine the claims of nihilism and moral realism in recent literature, present a case for moral realism, discuss a few theories of desire, connect moral realism to an evaluative perceptual model of desire, and conclude that not only is this the best theory of desire but that this psychological faculty offers a clear counterexample to nihilism.

Keywords : desire, moral realism, nihilism, perception

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