Subjectivism

David Hume (1711 – 17760) is the father of subjectivism.

His moral theory is based on the following components:

•Agents perform actions.

•Receivers experience pleasure or pain.

•Spectators sympathetically experience the pleasure or pain.

•The moral spectator's sympathetic pleasure or pain constitutes a moral assessment of the agent's character trait, thereby deeming the trait to be a virtue or a vice.

Moral actions/assessments are not based on reason but on feelings or sentiments.

**So, what is moral Subjectivism?**

To a moral subjectivist,reason has nothing to do with morality. Therefore, morality is a matter of feeling and not thinking.

There are two versions of moral subjectivism: **simple subjectivism** and **emotivism.**

**Simple subjectivism:**

•‘morality is a matter of sentiment rather than fact…’, a sense like our other senses...filtering our experience....

•When you say something is good or bad it means you approves or disapproves of it.

Example: Argument on homosexuality

Homosexuality is morally acceptable

Homosexuality is right

Homosexuality is good

Homosexuality ought to be done

**i.e Rula approves of homosexuality.**

**Flaws in simple subjectivism argument**

•According to simple subjectivism there are no disagreements. Each one is simply expressing an attitude

•When opposing attitudes about homosexuality, disagreement are a fact in differing arguments

•Simple subjectivism is incorrect

Therefore although Simple subjectivism seems good and easy and tolerant, it has its own problems:

1. It cannot account for moral disagreement

2. It implies that we’re always right

3. It makes morality itself a useless concept

4. It reduces moral choices to mere likes and dislikes

**Emotivism**

**To the Emotivist,** although moral judgments seem to be mere statements, they are are really disguised commands.

**Rachel’s response to subjectivism and Emotivism (3.5 EMP)**

To him, moral judgments must be supported by reasons...

For example; if you like peaches, you don’t have to defend your preference but if you like torturing cats, you should have a reason

"Moral truths are truths of reason: that is...a moral judgment is true if it is backed by better reasons than the alternatives.” P (41).

**Rachel’s conclusion:**

**•**Moral thinking and moral conduct are a matter of weighing reasons and being guided by them

•In focusing on attitudes and feelings, Ethical Subjectivism seems to be going in the wrong direction