

"Value Realism and Idiosyncrasy"

Claire Kirwin

Abstract:

Even the most robust of value realists will typically allow that there are some parts of our lives as agents that should not be understood in realist terms. When it comes to those things that seem properly individual, personal to us—choosing a career, a spouse, a flavor of ice cream—realist and anti-realist alike have tended to suppose that the value that is on the scene here must stem from the agent's own particular set of attitudes, values, likes, and preferences, rather than residing in the valued object. For in such arenas, it is not merely that we do differ from one another, but rather that it seems perfectly right and proper that we should differ in these ways: these parts of our lives are, as I put it, properly 'idiosyncratic'. This fact has seemed to many philosophers to foreclose the possibility of realism in these areas. In this paper, I argue that this is a mistake: the phenomenon of idiosyncrasy is fully compatible with the reality of such value. Even such things as a preference for peanut-butter-cup ice cream can, I claim, be understood as a response to real value.