"Why the 'View From Nowhere' Gets Us Nowhere"

Morgan

Strategy

- To argue that Feezell's use of Nagel's subjective-objective distinction to justify sports ethics is mistaken
- Morgan instead wants to show that ethical considerations enter into sports when they are considered intersubjectively

A Subjective Moral Account Fails

- From the subjective view, sports are important and meaningful because they excite our personal beliefs and values about what is subjectively important and valuable
- Morgan agrees that this autobiographical element of subjectivity explains why any one of us like to play sports
- However, Morgan does not think that the subjective viewpoint justifies sports and their moral good
- One's personal motivations for playing sports do not make the sport rational or moral

Perfectionism and Moral Justification

- Feezell might respond that his account is intended for those for whom sports already matter
- For these participants, sports are intrinsically valuable and pursuing sports reflects a desire to practice the values one already holds
- Perfectionism: the philosophical view that moral perfection is attainable and is what one should pursue
The Market and Motivation

- While some people are motivated to pursue sports in order to improve themselves, it is naive to think that all or most people are.
- In a market economy, what motivates many people is money and money is an instrumental reason for acting.
- For many, "sports matter because of the instrumental payoff they provide, the usual suspects include money and fame, not the intrinsic requirements of skill and excellence they pose." (91)
- If many pursue sports for money and fame, then their subjective motivations conflict with the internal goods of sports.

Argument Against Subjective Motivations

1. The internal goods of sports (what makes sports intrinsically valuable) are what give sports their moral significance.
2. If one is motivated to pursue sports for money and fame, then one is not pursuing sports for their internal goods.
3. If one is not motivated to pursue sports for their internal goods, then one is not motivated by that which gives sports their moral significance.
4. Therefore, if one is motivated to pursue sports for money and fame, then one is not motivated by that which gives sports their moral significance.
5. But, Feezell asserts that our attachment to sports reflects our personal beliefs and values (subjective motivational sets) about the value of sports to our lives.
6. But, for those whose sports motivations are fame and fortune, it is not sports that are personally valuable, but money.
7. So, a person's subjective motivational set (in playing sports) is not sufficient to justify a rational or moral basis for playing sports.

Intersubjective Factors in Playing Sports

- Morgan thinks that Feezell's account leaves out an important feature of our personal attachment to sports.
- Sports are social practices and the goods of sports (what makes them valuable) are importantly made up of their cooperative nature and the shared understanding of their significance.
- The goods of sports (e.g., standards of excellence) are learned from other members of the sports community and the traditions informing the sports.

The Intersubjective Move

- Even if a sports participant gains their intrinsic interest in sports naturally (without others), "they still must make an intersubjective move to ensure their self-interests are conducive to the good of the game, the very same intersubjective move that other practitioners quite consciously and deliberately make, which consists of subordinating their own personal reasons for playing the game to those that the game itself inspires and requires." (92)
- "...what underlies, mediates, and colors our subjective attachment to sports...is itself a carefully cultivated and crafted intersubjectivity." (92)
An Objective Moral Account Fails

- Just as the subjective viewpoint cannot provide a good account of sports ethics, so too the objective viewpoint cannot provide an account of the moral character of sports
- For Feezell and Nagel, the objective view of sports conceives of sports as absurd and meaningless activities
- At the same time, moral reflection and morality depends on complete objectivity and the banishment of any personal, subjective interests and considerations
  - Ethical theories create views on how to live morally by taking a stance from "nowhere"

View from Nowhere is Bad for Sports

- When viewed objectively, there is nothing of value in sports: they cannot be seen as valuable activities and cannot be justified morally
- Even though we subjectively finds sports valuable, there is nothing of subjective value left when sports are viewed from the objective viewpoint
- At the same time, universal moral claims cannot have any subjective considerations in them, or else they would not be universal

Objectivity Reengaged

- Feezell tries to overcome the paradox of the subjective valuing and objective devaluing of sport
- Feezell proposes that sports can be seen as having value if we "reengage" our reflections back to those valued subjective views
  - But this means that we have to turn our back on universality and the foundation of morality in order to find value in sports
  - In short, moral consideration of sports requires one to reject the very basis of universal morality

View From Nowhere Fails

- Morgan thinks the View From Nowhere fails to give an account of sports ethics because it (i)distorts the moral character of sports and (ii) claims for sports’ moral value cannot be justified under the objective-subjective account
- But, Morgan wants to reinterpret Feezell's "reengagement" idea to provide an account of sport ethics
  - Morgan thinks Feezell is on to something
Three Options for Moral Reflection

- Three options for moral reflection
  1. First-person singular ("I")
  2. Intersubjective (first-person plural "we")
  3. Objective (impersonal, universal, view from nowhere)

The Intersubjective Account

- Morgan thinks the intersubjective account is the only one that could accommodate Feezell's "reengaged" moral reflection
- The "we" of interpersonal moral reflection makes a moral life possible
- A moral life and moral reflection requires…
  - "a point of view that opens up a space for the consideration of others,
  - "and a reflective regard for those others and the shared goods that define the projects to which they are mutually bound that goes beyond individual calculations of utility." (98)

Sports and Flourishing

1. A virtuous person is most likely to flourish in communities where one’s actions and reasons for acting are held accountable.
2. Sports situate individuals in "practice communities to which their actions and…reasons for action are held accountable." (98)
3. Sports is a social practice in which a virtuous person is likely to flourish.