

"Objective Morality"

Post by "Cassius" of December 26, 2018 at 1:37 PM

Hiram is that response yours? I generally agree with it and think it goes in the right direction. My caveats would be:

(1) I know what Epicurus wrote, but I don't know what "Humanism" means, so I personally don't consider myself a "humanist" any more than I consider myself a "hedonist." So as for me personally I do not write an answer implying that I accept anything about those frameworks. And so the way the question is phrased I would not even hazard a guess as to the right answer because in my view there's no way to define "Humanist" without a specific context and definition. And even if one were asserted, I wouldn't accept it as possibly final, because no one really has the authority to give one.

(2) When we talk objective morality it sounds like (and I bet lots of people read it as) Ayn Rand objectivism. Here's one place I agree with her - in her dislike of "package deals." That's why I can't accept "hedonism" or "humanism" or anything else because there is too much baggage that goes with them. And so when the answer ends "So I would say NO, humanists "must" not (or are not obligated)....." I am not sure whether that is valid or not, since I see no way to tell what "a humanist" really thinks.

(3) I think the same objections apply to "moral realism" -- I don't know what that means either, nor is there anyone authorized to give a single definition for it. We can start talking about "according to the definition of so-and-so, but in most cases I really don't have the time to pursue that kind of thing, which seems to me like rabbit-chasing.

(4) So to get to the point beyond the unacceptable context of the question, I agree with your direction that the real issue is what the word "objective" means. To most people "objective" means one-size-fits-all and "there's only one answer" and everyone who fairly looks at the same question will reach the same answer. I think Epicurean theory rejects that kind of thing - it rejects the idea that there is a single perspective that is valid for all people, and I think most definitions of "objective" imply that.

(5) Does morality exist apart from the humans involved in the relationship? Does morality exist "in the air"? No, of course not - how could it in the absence of gods or ideal forms? Now to be fair to Ayn Rand, I am not sure that she thought it existed in the air either, even though her followers probably interpret her that way.

(6) I think all these questions find answers in the Epicurean physics which shows that gods and ideal forms do not exist, and also in [PD30-40](#). The only morality worthy of its name is that which

succeeds in providing for pleasant / happy living. All relationships among people should be geared to that goal in order to be consistent with nature. As to precisely how those gears are set in any particular case, that is going to be determined under the circumstances of the people involved, always looking toward the goal of pleasant/happy living. Nothing in the field of morality is exempt from that perspective, no matter what words might be used to substitute for "virtue."