

AN ESSAY ON WHETHER MORALS ARE FACTS - IS JUSTICE REAL?

Are morals facts or objectively true in other words?

What if one says there are no moral facts? Then one can have no objection to acid attacks on little children. This thought puts big pressure on the person to accept morality as a collection of facts. So even if we need morality desperately can we really have it when that is the pressure we have? No - being compelled to be moral means you are compelled to go through the moral motions! You are not being moral!

Facts are so important it is better to have things you wrongly think are facts than not to care if you have facts or not. Thus morality demands that you adopt moral ideas as facts even they are not. The intention to be right matters more than being right.

Sam Harris like many of his critics seeks and defends objective morality. All agree with Harris that if morality is about being well and healthy then science then can show you how to do be moral. But they say he has the wrong definition of morality. On that basis, they are adamant that science cannot ground and teach morality. If so then you cannot say science shows we should be moral and what morality is.

The objectors are saying then that morality is about right and wrong and not about what makes people well. Defenders of Harris say he is only saying right and wrong and wellbeing and not being well are just the same thing.

Critics of Harris often seem to be coming from the angle that he talks about something that is like Utilitarianism but they do not consider Utilitarianism a moral theory. Utilitarianism is about consequences. If moral consequentialism is true then hypothetically if you could murder Muhammad, Moses or Jesus to avert religious murder and wars then you should. You can kill them in the cot in a parallel universe. It becomes a binding enforced duty to murder.

But even if it is true this would be hypothetically right. Utilitarianism does not worry about that. It is about the non-hypothetical. It is about life as it is. So though it has a dark side on the hypothetical level that does not matter.

If you lay out all the possible moral theories and not one makes sense then Utilitarianism by a process of elimination becomes a moral theory. If moral rules end up being rubbish all you can do is just say people must aim for the greatest happiness of the greatest number and leave it at that. Morality whatever it demands certainly demands trying to be practical and if no theory works that means Utilitarian as hard to practice as it is will have to do.

What if Harris might be right or might be wrong? Critics cannot say he is definitely wrong. It is best and therefore moral to assume he is right.

You know you have a moral duty to decide what is moral so if wellbeing is the best guess then it is your duty. Not all facts are provable but that does not change what they are - facts. In your own way you do know you are right - you just cannot prove it to anybody else.

SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS

Most who say morality is not about wellbeing are people who think that good or moral is whatever God says regardless of whether it helps us or not. But what if we said that God says morality is whatever is good for us? So we are going around in circles.

Others say that the proof that morality is not wellbeing by definition is:

1 Worrying about wellbeing says nothing about what conditions it should be given out under. It does not care about fairness.

2 how people can end up being better off by being less fair. Hypothetically, if torturing a baby before the whole world's eyes had the power to make it happy. So not only do we have no concern for fairness we have a situation where unfairness is made to prevail.

Against both it can be said that giving good things to the bad and good equally cannot lead to a good situation in the end. It

does in the short term. So wellbeing belongs to those who will use it well. Wellbeing does ask for fairness to be considered otherwise it is not really wellbeing.

And even if the points are right they are not strong enough to warrant discarding the view that wellbeing and morality are interchangeable. They have to have enough regard for fairness to work. It doesn't matter if it is not perfect when you cannot expect anything else.

There is an argument that being well is important but that does not tell us morality is meant to be chiefly or only about wellbeing. But if it is 51% about being well then that will have to do. To argue that it is not about being well more than anything else is divorcing morality too much from what people want and need. It amounts to saying it is all about rules not what is good for you.

It is pointed out that happiness from donating to the poor is important and the happiness from watching porn does not compare.

It may be the case that the best way to defend objective morality is not an option. If that is God, God is not an option for it leads to ludicrous scenarios. So we choose the next best thing which can only be science.

CONCLUSION

What is the difference between wellbeing and right/moral?

Harris says the two are the same thing. Against that it is argued that morality is not by definition about wellbeing. But surely it has to be about it sufficiently to make that hair splitting of no consequence?

Moral principle says if you have no idea of what is objectively moral or what it means then it is objectively moral to make an attempt. You need objective morality and the concept is forced on you even if you say morality is relative – such a saying is unnatural and forced and warped. It is better to guess and live the morality you have for errors will show up in time if it is wrong or needs fixing. Guessing and testing is more important than grounding it or caring or knowing why it is morally correct. Practicing what you understand to be objective morality is a principle and the most foundational and important and basic moral principle of all. If you have to guess the best guess is that morality is about maintaining the wellbeing of others and yourself. Harris says objective morality is grounded in science and if that is a guess there is no better guess. It is objectively moral to guess it.

It makes no sense to argue that morality cannot be grounded without a God to decree it or acknowledge it. If it needs grounding does it matter what does the grounding? Surely something can ground itself best rather than having to depend on something else to ground it? Morality is being abused to turn it into a case for God!

It is wise to hold that if objective morality cannot stand up for itself and ground itself then it is not objective morality at all. A fact is a fact and is independent of what anything even God wants. If there were no God or anything it would be an objective fact that there is nothing. Morality is about what is real and the realest way to do things so it needs no grounding or validation outside of itself.