

Reading Guide #2

Enoch, "Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are Too)"

Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism"*

1. **Enoch proposes the "counterfactual test" for objectivity which involves asking whether something would still be true if our beliefs and practices were very different. If the claim would still be true even if our beliefs and practices are different, then the counterfactual test says that the claim is objective. If the claim changes when our beliefs and practices change then the counterfactual test says that the claim is subjective. Use the counterfactual test to explain whether the following two sentences are objective.**
 - i. "A \$20 bill is valuable"
 - ii. "If we behave well in life, in the next life, we come back as a higher creature."
2. Does Enoch think that his arguments establish that moral claims are objective or merely that they aspire to objectivity? Explain the distinction and explain where Enoch comes down on this.
3. What is the difference between psychological egoism and ethical egoism? What is psychological egoistic hedonism and how does it relate to psychological egoism?
4. Criticize the following argument:

Suppose I help a stranger out, apparently out of selfless generosity. Isn't it true that I'm doing precisely what I most want to do, and therefore isn't it true that I am in some sense being exactly as selfish as someone who does not help the stranger out. After all both of us are just doing what we want to do. (See page 550 in Feinberg)
5. On page 554, Feinberg distinguishes between wanting a thing or event and wanting the sensation that arises from getting that thing. Using your own example, explain this distinction.
6. **Do you think that most of the time people want things or the sensations associated with getting those things? In order to decide this question, you might want to ask yourself if you would substitute one of your favorite activities with a drug that simulated the feeling you had when you engaged in this activity.**
7. **One argument for psychological egoism points out that whenever we appear to do something selfless, we still have the pleasant satisfaction that we are doing the right thing. Assuming that the objector is correct in thinking that some pleasant self-satisfaction sensations do arise whenever we do the right thing, do you think that this self-satisfaction is always the ultimate motive of their action? [Hint: your answer here will depend on your answer to #4 and should reflect an understanding of why someone might answer 'no' to #4.]**