

Sam, Russell, I've stuck to the limit, but sort my response into two objections, with no claim to overall consistency. If either sways you I'll be glad.

i.

'Science is based on values that must be presupposed.' The *practice* of science, perhaps—though zombies-of-the-lab, who arrive at all our theories, devoid of epistemic intent—these are not clearly absurd. Zombies aside, the *product* of science—hypotheses, data, truths, et cet—do not themselves seem value-laden. Moreover, the traditional distinction of Pure from Applied, elided in your argument, should be maintained—and that without pronouncing on the value of either. In drawing this line one coolly perceives that knowledge is neutral, motivated into medicine by something prior, something strictly unrequired but highly desirable.¹ Medicine *is* a science, sure, sure— but if your position is in effect this: that Ethics is a science as much as bio-psychiatry or any engineering—then it's not as scandalous as many of us had hoped. All agency is suffused with the normative, including the calm treachery of Meta-ethic's Sceptic, who wonders if anything *really* matters. His *wondering*, that is—his *doing* has motive, the thesis thought, itself does not.

'Science is based on values'—this could serve as adage for your critic, Sam, who argues onward that Science cannot possibly comprehend that which it presupposes.

The Health and Moral Sciences are more than analogs, as I understand you—they're actually co-extensive, so long as we push for a wiser, more inclusive sense of 'health', and make precise our sense of 'Moral'—for both converge on animal flourishing. A doctor who wonders Is flourishing healthy, a hero who wonders Is flourishing good, these, I concede, seem close to incoherence. But the meta-ethicist who asks: Is flourishing good, is *anything* good, *really*?—he's doing his job, willing to sound immoral and absurd in pursuit of the subtle distinction. The *meta* in his title is license to add that qualifying *really*, to recede for a spell from vital demands and discern what's strictly there.

If anything's good, flourishing is, but *is* it? As long as you allow this question some life, in our seminars if not our Psychology labs and courts of law, we may agree.

ii.

How to defeat the Agonist, for whom a world has value only insofar as it enables competitions of the zero-sum sort, and a life insofar as it (i)strives against others, and (ii)surpasses them. The facts of empirical psychology are as *useful* to the Agonist as to agents of utopia, yet his primary judgement on what is of worth is pre-empirical. Let us run however many iterations of our cosmos,

¹ Evidential norms seem a special case, required both by Pure and Applied, thru science's mandate to discover what is true. They act as propaedeutic from the biases and projections that hinder elucidation of objective law. Moral norms too *may* be objective, among the laws elucidated, but this cannot be presumed. That science in practice requires one kind of value (evidential) does not improve the case for it presuming another (moral).

half in which agonist value is maximized, half utilitarian utopias; let it be found that without exception, any one member of a Utilitarian utopia has more joy than however successful a demonic victor. Our findings may suffice to sway the Egoist, who, morally obligated to maximize his own well-being, now infers that it's found among hedonists of a wider social scope. But the agonist need not reduce the value of strife to hedonic value. Indeed he may give special (objective) moral value to victory fought and achieved with great suffering.²

Winner-take-all or All-shall-be-well?³ Gods may require literary theory just as much as moral science when deciding what sort of cosmos to initiate. I agree there's a continuity between judgements of taste and ethics, so that literary theory may itself be a science: if, e.g., the point of a story is to give its audience pleasure, then Psychology is the rightful arbiter of literary standard. But what kind of cosmos gives its audience the most pleasure? From the couch of Brahma, in *sat-chit-ananda*, it may above all be discord, agony, and the tragic that compel. If the bliss of one Brahma outweighs the compounded sufferings of however many Players, then.....well then I suppose we're still in empirical Ethics. "*So damn the hedonics, strife is best even when noone enjoys it!*" There's this debate among many to be had when designing a universe, among radically divergent visions of the good. Psychology may decide the issue, it may not; this latter debate is one for Philosophy, a discipline which has some dialogic priority over science, I argue, when the topic is Morals. I'm tempted to say: the fact we're all debating whether Ethics may be subsumed in Science, is evidence it may not. There may be a regress problem here, where to free Ethics from non-empiric philosophy you must do an awful lot of non-empiric philosophy.

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² However sweet victory, however joyous utopia, we can always make it moreso, with e.g. some neuro-tweaks. Hedonic data from the iterating cosmos may thus be irrelevant even to the *hedonist*-Agonist. If joy is as cheap as serotonin then the agonist may demand we ramp up his signature joys (of dominance, of confidence, of sustained resistance) and minimize empathy, so his world of strife may be most unspartan in its payoff.

³ From behind the veil of ignorance, most of us would, playing the odds, vote for utopia. But if the cosmos is to have but two denizens, Norman and Hiram, its not so clear what's in our best interest here.