Critique

G. Benjamin Neal

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Abstract

1 Metaphysical Arguments

1.1 Teleology

At its core, teleology posits that organisms and systems exhibit goal-directed behaviors or ends. In moral philosophy, this view suggests that human flourishing or "the good" serves as an intrinsic endpoint of ethical action. Modern criticism often brands teleological accounts as anthropomorphic or scientifically dubious—yet this paper refrains from flatly denying goal-orientation. Instead it treats teleology as an implicit backdrop, inviting us to ask: does nature itself "aim" at anything, or do ends emerge only within interpretive frameworks?

The general idea of Teleology for morals or more broadly human kind is something taken for granted to be highly suspect and perhaps unknowable. A flat denial of goal oriented view of nature is not put forth but is largely assumed throughout this paper.

1.2 Naturalism

Naturalism holds that all phenomena—mental, moral, or physical—are continuous with the natural world describable by empirical science. Within ethics, naturalism seeks to ground values in facts about human biology, psychology, or social evolution, avoiding appeals to the supernatural. Yet strict naturalism must confront the "is/ought" gap: deriving normative prescriptions purely from descriptive premises.

1.3 Materialism with Room for Idealism

Materialism asserts that matter and physical processes constitute the fundamental substance of reality. But a rigid materialism struggles to account for consciousness, intentionality, or value-laden experiences. "Room for idealism" introduces a qualified dual-aspect or emergentist stance: mental phenomena arise from physical substrates yet possess irreducible qualities. This hybrid view preserves a materialist ontology while acknowledging that ideas, values, and meanings are not mere epiphenomena—they actively shape both individual life and collective practices.

2 Epistemological Arguments

2.1 The Role of Science

Science is a systematic approach to understanding phenomena through observation, hypothesis, experimentation, and revision. At its core lies a cycle: we observe patterns, formulate explanatory models, test predictions, and refine or reject those models based on empirical evidence. This iterative process distinguishes science from mere opinion or anecdote, grounding claims in reproducible data and communal scrutiny. By emphasizing falsifiability and replication, the scientific method remains self-correcting, continually edging closer to models that reliably describe aspects of the world.

2.2 The Role of Philosophy

What is the use of Philosophy and its relation to Science is an ongoing contemporary debate. The question wether there are definite lines of demarcation or if borders are a gradient composed of a gradual shift between different disciplines is important to Epistemological concerns.

Facts alone are inert without a framework to interpret them. Raw data become significant only when woven into narratives that explain "why" and "how." Integration involves three steps: Identifying patterns that call for explanation. Situating those patterns within broader theoretical or cultural contexts. Articulating a coherent story that links empirical findings to human concerns.

By exposing hidden assumptions, philosophy prevents science from mistaking provisional models for final truth.

- What facts mean

2.3 Open vs Closed Systems

An open system exchanges matter, energy, or information with its environment, allowing adaptation to new inputs. A closed system, by contrast, operates in isolation, with fixed boundaries and no external influence. In scientific inquiry, treating a phenomenon as open invites complexity, feedback loops, and emergent behavior; treating it as closed fosters clarity and control but risks oversimplification. Choosing one perspective over the other shapes both experimental design and the kinds of explanations deemed acceptable.

2.4 The problem of Reality

Science is not static but a *dynamic* and revisionary process—an ongoing attempt to correct perceived shortcomings. It is shaped not only by empirical findings but also by a developing scientific consciousness that seeks to *interpret* and *contextualize* those findings.

The notion that science functions as a mirror—merely reflecting the object as it is—fails to account for the subject's role in shaping understanding. We do not stand outside the world we examine; we are always already participants. Facts are never encountered in isolation—they are filtered through the lens of our own cognition, culture, and expectation. Without self-awareness, interpretation becomes projection: the self mistaken for the world.

This tension may be characterized as "Science as Mirror" versus "Science as Medium". Empirical findings are not raw truths; they are interpreted signals, refracted through conceptual frameworks, cultural assumptions, and personal biases.

2.5 Science does not exist without Presuppositions

Every scientific inquiry rests on background beliefs—about the reliability of the senses, the uniformity of nature, or the objectivity of measurement. These presuppositions are rarely stated, yet they constrain what counts as evidence and shape how anomalies are handled. Acknowledging them is not a weakness but a strength: it invites critical reflection on the limits and possibilities of our methods.

2.6 Perspectivism

Perspectivism holds that knowledge claims are always from a particular vantage point, never from a "view from nowhere." Different cultural, historical, or disciplinary perspectives highlight distinct features of the same phenomenon. Rather than seeking a single, unified account, perspectivism encourages a plurality of models, each illuminating complementary dimensions of complex realities.

The concept of objectivity, as discussed by Amartya Sen, involves both observation dependence and impersonality. In psychiatric practice, we see this tension manifest in concepts such as "interobserver variability" and the use of statistical measures like Kappa coefficients to assess diagnostic reliability within the DSM system of categorical classification.

3 Situational Normality

Before ethical reflection begins, we must examine the scaffolding upon which moral judgments are built. Normality is not a neutral backdrop—it is a dynamic construct shaped by context, consensus, and power. This section explores how normality emerges, how it functions epistemically, and how it quietly governs the boundaries of moral discourse.

Normality as a descriptive or sociological phenomenon—how it emerges, shifts, and operates across contexts.

Epistemic or psychological dimensions (e.g. how normality shapes perception, identity, or self-deception). Critique of normativity itself, perhaps as a precursor to ethical reflection.

3.0.1 Sociocultural

3.0.2 Historical

3.0.3 Functional

3.0.4 Power

4 The Ethical and Moral

4.1 Ammoralism

Ammoralism denies that moral judgments have intrinsic authority, viewing them as contingent social constructs rather than universal truths.

4.2 Emotivism

Emotivism reduces moral statements to expressions of personal attitude or emotion—"stealing is wrong" becomes "I disapprove of stealing."

4.3 Normality and Moral Intuition

Our intuitive sense of right and wrong often aligns with what a given community treats as normal. Disrupting norms can trigger moral anxiety or moral innovation, depending on the robustness of communal support for change.

5 Reflections on Selfhood

5.1 Nurture and Nature

Identity arises from the interplay of biological endowment and social shaping. Nature provides the potentials; nurture scaffolds the actualization of those potentials within specific contexts. Identity Informed by Biology Genetic and neurological factors set constraints and affordances for personality, cognition, and emotion. Yet biology does not dictate destiny—cultural meaning-making and individual agency co-author our evolving sense of self.

5.2 The Self as a Constructive Process

5.3 Vitality and Self Actualization

6 Medical Consciousness

Medical consciousness is not merely a cognitive stance—it is a historical and ethical posture. It can reinforce dominant narratives or interrupt them. It can pathologize difference or illuminate suffering. It is shaped by the values we hold, the language we use, and the silences we permit.

7 Contemporary Psychiatric Theory

7.1 Discrete Approach

Many critiques have pointed out deep-seated problems with the DSM's diagnostic "pigeon-holing," and many reforms, such as a diagnostic system based on dimensions of pathology, have been proposed. However, insurance systems require discrete codes, creating practical constraints on diagnostic innovation Ronald Pies, "How "Objective" Are Psychiatric Diagnoses?," Accessed: 2025-09-09, *Psychiatry (Edgmont)* 4, no. 10 (2007): 18–22, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2860522/.

- Genetics-based classifications
- Hereditary factors
- Neuroimaging correlates
- Cleanly separated from normalcy and from each other
- Categorical diagnostic systems
- Aristotelian category theory

7.2 Dimensional Approach

- Continuum-based understanding
- Neuroimaging spectrum approaches
- Subclinical versions of psychiatric symptoms
- Influenced by Humean or Kantian philosophical frameworks

7.3 Network Approach

- Interconnected symptom networks
- No central causal mechanism
- Neurobiological correlates
- Contextual sensitivity
- Computational modeling approaches
- Influenced by Whiteheadian or Deleuzian process philosophy

The fact that many patients meet criteria for multiple diagnoses simultaneously, or shift between diagnoses over time, further suggests the boundaries may be artificial constructs rather than natural kinds. This phenomenon challenges the discrete categorical approach and supports more fluid, dimensional or network-based conceptualizations.

References

Pies, Ronald. “How “Objective” Are Psychiatric Diagnoses?” Accessed: 2025-09-09, *Psychiatry (Edgmont)* 4, no. 10 (2007): 18–22. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2860522/.