

reject Laudan's instrumentalist conception of rationality, and the instrumentalist conception of methodology built upon it.⁸

V. Axiology and the Rational Resolution of Axiological Disputes

Once the instrumentalist conception of rationality is rejected, Laudan's account of axiology and the rational resolution of controversy concerning scientific ends is jeopardized. For Laudan's proposals concerning the rational evaluation of ends depend on instrumentalism.

Laudan is insistent that an account of scientific rationality include an account of the rational evaluation of putative scientific ends:

We have so far been assuming that all aims were on a par and that a methodology's task was simply to investigate, in an axiologically-neutral fashion, which means promote those aims. On this analysis, the construction of a methodology of science is the development of a set of methodological rules, conceived as hypothetical imperatives, parasitic on a given set of cognitive or epistemic ends. Yet, although this is an attractive conception of methodology, it scarcely addresses the full range of epistemic concerns germane to science. I suspect that we all believe that some cognitive ends are preferable to others. Methodology, narrowly conceived, is in no position to make those judgments, since it is restricted to the study of means and ends. We thus need to supplement methodology with an investigation into the legitimate or permissible ends of inquiry. That is, a theory of scientific progress needs an axiology of inquiry, whose function is to certify or de-certify certain proposed aims as legitimate (Laudan, 1987, p. 29).

Laudan argues that cognitive/scientific goals can be rationally evaluated; that 'there is a wide array of critical tools which we can utilize for the rational assessment of a group of cognitive aims or goals' (Laudan, 1984, p. 50). His discussion (pp. 50–66) concerns two such tools: utopianism, and failure to accord with the values implicit in communal practices and judgments.

A goal is *utopian* if proponents can offer no grounds for thinking that it can be achieved. One can criticize goals for utopianism in three different ways: a goal is *demonstrably* utopian if it can be demonstrated that it is unachievable (e.g. the goal of infallible knowledge of universal claims, given empiricist strictures on evidence and the impossibility of establishing universal claims by (finite) experience); a goal is *semantically* utopian if it cannot be cogently

⁸The account of rationality Laudan offers is unambitious:

... beyond demanding that our cognitive goals must reflect our best beliefs about what is and is not possible, that our methods must stand in appropriate relations to our goals, and that our implicit and explicit values must be synchronized, there is little more that the theory of rationality can demand (1984, p. 64).

But the theory of rationality, understood epistemically, obviously does more. It tells us why certain beliefs are our 'best' ones; it tells us why satisfying these constraints (if Laudan is right about them) constitutes good reason for thinking that that which satisfies them is rational. The theory of rationality is the theory of evidence/good reason. It strives to say what is appropriately regarded as evidence/good reason. Laudan's account of rationality is far more shallow than this.