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'Value Freedom' and the Scope of Economic Inquiry:

II. *The Fact/Value Continuum and the Basis for Scientific and Humanistic Policy*

By LARRY DWYER*

ABSTRACT. Underlying the view of economic methodologists that the *economist* in his professional capacity is prohibited from making *value judgments* concerning *policy ends* is the assumption that there exists an irreducible gap between statements of fact and value judgments, such that value judgments are incapable of receiving support on the basis of *scientific inquiry*. Once a strict *fact/value dualism* is seen to be untenable, and once it is recognized that value judgments can be grounded in human needs and interests, the standard "purist" conception of the scope of *economic inquiry* can be rejected in favor of a "*humanist*" conception. It is argued that adoption of the wider "humanist" conception of the proper goals of economic inquiry is an important step in the development of an *economic science* responsive to the basic needs, interests, and aspirations of human beings.

I

The Alleged Fact/Value Dichotomy

A CRUCIAL ASSUMPTION underlying many a defense of the standard view is that there exists a strict dichotomy between "factual" judgments on the one hand and "value" judgments on the other, a realm of (positive) economic facts and generalizations which is conceptually separable from a (normative) realm of values. Thus Lionel Robbins:

Between the generalizations of positive and normative studies there is a logical gulf fixed which no ingenuity can disguise and no juxtaposition in space or time can bridge over.¹

Economists seem to have drawn one or the other of two conclusions from the posited existence of this fact/value dichotomy. Thus some have concluded that social scientific facts and generalizations never logically imply particular value judgments, that no value judgment can be validly deduced from any set of factual statements alone, and that no value judgment is contained in any conjunction of purely factual judgments. Those who would assent to these sorts of claims subscribe to what might be called the "weak form" of

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the view that there exists a fact/value dualism.² Some go further than this, however.

According to a second view, value judgments cannot be soundly inferred from statements of fact; no objective justificatory relation can hold between any statement of fact alone and any particular value judgment. Those who so regard the alleged fact/value gap as "absolute," "unbridgeable," "irreducible," subscribe to what might be called the "strong form" of the view that there exists a fact/value dichotomy. It is the alleged existence of an irreducible logical gap between statements of fact and value judgments which has led many economists (and other social scientists) to expel value judgments from the domain of those statements regarded as capable of being established on the basis of scientific inquiry. It is adherence to the alleged fact/value dualism in its strong form which underlies Robbins' conviction that "if we disagree about ends it is a case of thy blood or mine—or live and let live according to the importance of the difference or the relative strength of our opponents" and Rowan's recently stated view that since differences over value judgments ". . . can never be settled by any appeal to the facts," economists who differ over the acceptability of some particular judgment ". . . can merely offer agreement or disagreement."³ Hutchison speaks for many proponents of the standard view when he denies "scientific status" to value judgments on the grounds that they

. . . cannot be tested or refuted intersubjectively in the same way as the "positive" statements of science and a consensus regarding them cannot be reached of the same kind and in the same way.⁴

Although those economists who uphold fact/value dualism in its strong form do not, by and large, make their ethical position explicit, such a thesis is only plausible on the basis of a certain general type of subjectivist theory of value, specifically a non-naturalist subjectivist theory of value.⁵ On a non-naturalist subjectivist view, value judgments are neither true nor false, are not testable and cannot be reduced to, nor inferred from, nor in any way justified on the basis of facts. According to the non-naturalist subjectivist, value judgments are, variously, imperatives, prescriptions, exhortations, expressions of attitude, opinion or desire conveying the state of feelings or emotions of the speaker or writer; attempts to redirect or reinforce other peoples' attitudes or feelings and so on, rather than information about some objective state of affairs. Since, on such a theory of value, experience can never establish the truth or falsity of, or justification for any evaluation of that experience, value judgments are taken to stand outside the domain of statements constituting empirical science. As many proponents of the stan-

dard view see it, since value judgments cannot be tested by empirical procedures, they cannot be admitted into the body of so-called "positive" economics. While observation and experiment may settle scientific questions, ethical questions, by their very nature, remain unsettled. Such views reflect the conviction that since reasoning cannot bridge the posited fact/value gap, value judgments are incapable of any kind of rational or objectively valid justification in the light of factual considerations. Economics as a positive science is, therefore, to be detached from value judgments and the economist has no warrant for making such judgments.

As an initial assault on those who affirm the strong thesis, one might point out that it is arbitrary and naive to stipulate what science can and cannot do. To claim that certain sorts of questions (questions of fact) can be studied scientifically but that other sorts (questions of value) cannot, is to set boundaries to the scope of human knowledge. Indeed anyone who upholds the strong form of the fact/value dichotomy, in effect,

. . . claims to know enough to know that a certain problem does not lie within the scope of science. Whence comes this knowledge? It is a knowledge of what science is and forever will be as well as a knowledge of what the problem is and forever will be. Such a knowledge is truly astounding.⁶

Given our lack of any sort of suitable demarcation criterion for distinguishing science from non-science,⁷ it would seem that one ought to have very good reasons, indeed, for claiming that there is something in the nature of value judgments which puts them forever beyond the pale, forever beyond susceptibility of appraisal on rational grounds. Do good reasons exist for making such a claim?

I believe this question must be answered in the negative. Value judgments are not obviously the kind of thing non-naturalist subjectivists say they are. Since the function of a statement depends on such things as its context, its grammatical form, the intention of the speaker or writer, and the response of the hearer or reader, critics of ethical subjectivism have been quick to point out that it is not always possible to translate value judgments into utterances expressing emotions or imperatives and that the attempt to do so frequently obfuscates rather than clarifies the nature of such judgments. Indeed, the view that value judgments are emotive utterances or disguised commands flies in the face of the obvious fact that many value judgments not only have the grammatical form of declarative sentences but also that many people take themselves to be asserting something when they make value judgments. They consider they are not merely voicing personal feelings or attitudes, or attempting to affect the feelings and attitudes of others; but that they are

offering reasons in support of their value judgments in a way which presupposes that they are capable of justification. Therefore, they feel that rational argumentation often leads to a consensus among people who initially hold conflicting ethical views. To maintain that facts are never relevant to values, that factual statements are, in themselves, neutral or indifferent as between different evaluations of these facts, leads to absurdities such that any factual considerations whatever, can, equally, as properly or legitimately as any other, be adduced as a reason for upholding a particular value judgment or, alternatively, that a person can properly refuse to draw evaluative conclusions from any factual premise whatever. Moreover, if all facts are equally neutral, equally devoid of ethical significance, then it is difficult to see how any actual state of affairs could ever suggest an ethical problem, why there should ever be any cause to wonder whether something is good or bad or an action right or wrong.

At this stage, however, the proponent of the standard view is likely to call attention to the pervasiveness of disagreement in the sphere of ethical inquiry. He might maintain that since observation, measurement, experiment, statistical analysis, etc., settle scientific questions but leave ethical issues unsettled, even if the strong version of the fact/value dichotomy overstates the case, nevertheless, the existence of perennial disagreement in this latter area surely provides grounds for scepticism regarding the possibility of justifying value judgments.

Of course the mere *existence* of disagreement does nothing to undermine the claim that a dispute can be resolved by rational argumentation. Thus people may disagree as to whether there were over 400 persons at yesterday's picnic and scientists may disagree as to the cognitive worth of any number of competing hypotheses. Rather, what the proponent of the standard view will emphasize is this argument. One of the characteristic features of science is its capacity for removing disagreements concerning matters of fact. The standards of scientific inquiry provide, at least in principle, the means for adjudicating disputes of a non-ethical nature. Thus scientists who begin with diverse views are enabled to reach a consensus on various issues.

But disputes of an ethical nature can persist no matter how complete the factual information possessed by the disputants. Whereas the appeal to experience may be a decision procedure in science, as far as ethics is concerned, so the response goes, experience seems to decide very little. Are not value judgments, then, "ultimately" arbitrary and subjective? Such a conviction seems to underlie the views of Robbins and Rowan as noted above as well as Friedman's talk of ". . . fundamental differences in basic values, differences

about which men can ultimately only fight."⁸

But what entitles these economists to be so sceptical as to the possibility of attaining consensus in the domain of ethical inquiry and thereby as to the possibility of justifying value judgments on objective grounds?

In the first place the criticism claims too much on behalf of science. Science can only reduce uncertainty, never eliminate it. There is no need to repeat the sorts of arguments put forward by philosophers of science to make the point that factual data do not suffice to resolve disputes regarding the acceptability of competing empirical hypotheses, and that subjective factors play a crucial role in determining which hypotheses the scientist accepts and which he rejects. It is simply not the case that all ethical disputes are less likely to lead to a consensus than all disputes within the domain of science. I venture to say that there is a great deal more consensus among economists concerning the acceptability of the value judgment "any change in economic arrangements which leaves at least one person better off while leaving no one worse off is desirable," than there is concerning the hypothesis that monetary measures are, in general, more efficacious in curbing inflation than is fiscal policy. Total scepticism concerning the possibility of reaching agreement as regards the acceptability of value judgments is no more warranted than is total scepticism regarding the acceptability of scientific claims.⁹

In the second place, arguments of the sort put forward by Robbins and Rowan seem to presuppose that all value judgments are what Sen would call "basic" value judgments. According to Sen,¹⁰ a value judgment is "basic" to a person if that judgment is intended to apply under all conceivable circumstances and is "non-basic" otherwise. Thus, for example, if a person were to express the judgment "a rise in national income measured both at base and final year prices indicates a better economic situation," we can attempt to ascertain whether he would still assent to his judgment under all factual circumstances (*e.g.*, "even if the distribution of income were less egalitarian?") If it turns out that he would revise his judgment under certain circumstances, then the preferred judgment may be taken to be "non-basic." Only if a person's value judgment is basic in his value system can it be claimed that there can be no factual method of disputing it. And yet, despite the fact that one can never know whether somebody has made a basic value judgment (since it is always possible that under *some* conceivable factual revision that person would abandon or modify it), Robbins and Rowan presuppose that all disagreements regarding ends are disagreements regarding judgments of a basic sort. But why should this be assumed? Of course, just as the factual data needed to adjudicate some scientific debate may be unavailable at a

particular time, so too the factual information pertinent to justifying some value judgment may be unavailable. One cannot presuppose with Robbins and Rowan, however, that this is always or necessarily so.

II

Grounding Value Judgments on Human Needs

ALTHOUGH ADHERENTS of competing ethical views would agree that some kind of movement is permissible from facts about human nature or society to value judgments, there is as yet no consensus regarding "the correct method" for resolving ethical questions. Since it would be an enormous task, extending well beyond the boundaries of this paper, to assess the various positions which have been taken up in the debate concerning the proper method of ethical inquiry,¹¹ I shall instead point up what seem to me to be the most suitable sorts of premises upon which the economist can base his value judgments concerning policy ends and means.

Ethical theorists have, throughout the ages, presented lists of what they take to be plausible sets of ethical premises intended to serve as the foundation for a system of values. Whatever the specific criticisms levelled against any proposed set of principles, the common response to this sort of procedure is well known: since our ultimate principles of ethical reasoning cannot be deduced from any more general or fundamental principles, any attempt to give a thorough-going justification of such highest level ends will eventually result in a situation where one must either call an arbitrary halt to demand for justification, or one must go on in an infinite regress. Either way, so the criticism goes, the entire edifice of human values has no ends which serve as an objective foundation for the justification of our value judgments.

Contemporary ethical theorists have, however, become increasingly aware that the objection proposed does not constitute grounds for special scepticism concerning value judgments. Indeed, if the criticisms offered warrant adoption of complete scepticism with respect to the question of justifying value judgments, then one would also be required to adopt the same degree of scepticism with respect to the results of scientific inquiry. Wholesale scepticism as regards value judgments is as absurd as wholesale scepticism about observation claims. Consider the process of justifying some empirical hypothesis on the basis of a complex statement of evidence e_1 . If one were to ask the scientist's justification for affirming e_1 he will need to cite further evidence e_2 . If one were then to ask his justification for affirming e_2 he will need to cite further evidence e_3 and so on. But the fact that there need be no final stopping place in the process of justifying statements of evidence does

not warrant dismissing the claim that empirical hypotheses can be justified on objective grounds. Clearly, if the process of justifying a given hypothesis is ever to be completed, other hypotheses must be accepted without any further justification. Since there exists no indubitable bedrock foundation of statements about evidence upon which the entire corpus of scientific theory is constructed, the stopping point in the process of justifying any particular hypothesis comes when a certain set of evidential statements is regarded as sufficient to warrant its acceptance. And so, too, as regards the process of justifying value judgments.

Where to stop, then? The most plausible premises upon which to ground value judgments seem to me to be those which refer to basic human needs, goals, interests, aspirations. In this I follow the ethical naturalist¹² whose criteria for application of concepts such as "satisfaction," "happiness," "unhappiness," etc., are ultimately to be found in that which human beings need, desire or seek after. As Taylor has asserted.

To say of something that it fulfils human needs, wants or purposes, always constitutes a *prima facie* reason for calling it "good," that is, for applying the term in the absence of overriding considerations.¹³

That something serves a human purpose or fulfils some general condition for the satisfaction of human interests, in other words, constitutes a justifying reason for evaluation. The principle that the satisfaction of human interests as such is good is, indeed, ". . . the most fundamental conceptual principle of evaluative discourse."¹⁴

Grounding the economist's value judgments in human needs and aspirations provides a criterion for determining which sort of research deserves priority. It is just those sorts of facts about what people find worthwhile, facts about those things which make a favorable difference to people's lives, which the economist can take into account in order to justify his value judgments concerning the desirability of various practical economic goals and measures to attain them. Moreover, once the significance of research is tied to the needs of human beings, it would seem that the more pressing or urgent those needs, the more important the research directed toward their fulfilment. This being so, a plausible case can now be made for requiring the economist to place heavier weighting, for the purpose of making a decision as to a research topic, on the potential relevance of that research for solving the most pressing of those needs and aspirations which are presently frustrated.

While there is much that we human beings do not understand about our world, much research that is "intellectually exciting" irrespective of any policy applications, the most pressing needs and aspirations which are frustrated,

on the global level, are not those for increased enlightenment regarding issues of a highly theoretical nature, but, rather, those of a more material kind, *e.g.*, the need to be fed, clothed, sheltered. In a world where 80% of the population lack those material requisites adequate to maintain their existence at a level of well-being taken for granted by a minority, the opportunity cost of undertaking research which is at best only tenuously related to the fulfillment of such needs, would seem to be very high indeed.¹⁵

Grounding value judgments in human needs and aspirations also gives additional sense to the claim that the economist, by virtue of his training and specialized knowledge of complex matters of fact, is in a privileged position to determine what economic goals should be sought and what measures ought to be adopted to attain them.¹⁶ To better appreciate the thrust of this claim, we note that ethical theorists, in setting down the attributes of the "ideal ethical observer" or "competent moral judge," acknowledge the importance of the judge being well informed as to the facts of any situation concerning which he makes a value judgment. Thus we find Rawls claiming that the "competent moral judge" is that person who in addition to being intelligent, reasonable and sympathetic ". . . is expected to know in all cases whereupon he is called to express his opinion, the peculiar facts of those cases."¹⁷ Since possession of relevant factual information is a defining characteristic of the ideal ethical observer, surely the economist's possession of the "peculiar facts" which bear upon the justifiability of value judgements concerning economic policy ends and means—many of which will be too technical to be easily appreciated by someone without training in economics—places him in a privileged position to make such judgments.¹⁸ The paradox of the standard view is that while factual judgments may and often do have important evaluative implications, it is precisely those individuals who possess the greatest knowledge of the pertinent facts who are prohibited from making ethical pronouncements.

There is, of course, no set of mechanical rules which will enable economists or any other group of human beings to reach full consensus on different value judgments. But since the fundamental needs, aspirations, and interests of human beings may be discovered as a result of continuing biological, psychological, sociological and historical analysis, their determination is, in large part, an empirical matter. As Sidney Hook notes:

If the good is defined in relation to human need or interest (or preference, desire, satisfaction)—if in other words, the nature of morals is conceived as having any relation to human nature—then every statement about the good or better in any situation has a descriptive meaning, and in principle is decidable in reference to the needs and interests involved.¹⁹

Although much research remains to be done, especially in relating particular evaluative concepts to the satisfaction of human needs, there seems every reason to hope that, as our knowledge concerning such matters increases, a great deal more consensus than presently exists can be obtained with respect to circumstances under which the economist's value judgments concerning economic ends and means can be regarded as justified.

Having shown that, contrary to the claims of a number of proponents of the standard view, value judgments of the sort at issue are capable of objective justification in the light of factual considerations, I now turn to the question of what entitles the economist *qua* economist to make such judgments. How is this question to be decided? Since it is the goals of a discipline which delimit its scope, we are brought to consider the "proper" or "legitimate" goals of economic inquiry. In my view, proponents of the standard view, in upholding what I shall refer to as a "purist" conception of the goals of scientific inquiry in general and economic inquiry in particular, misconceive the "proper" goals. As the purist sees it the goals of the scientist *qua* scientist, whether undertaking "pure" research or "applied" research aimed at providing information to some policymaker, are, ideally, purely "cognitive" or "epistemic" in nature;²⁰ practical goals of economic and social policy are goals of the policymaker and concerned human beings, not goals of the scientist as such. Only if the "proper" goals of economic inquiry are taken to exclude practical socioeconomic goals can one maintain that it is only in his "extra scientific" capacity that the economist manifests a concern to attain such goals. In order to reject the standard view, then, one must reject the purist view upon which it is based.

In opposition to the standard view I shall argue that its underlying purist conception of the "proper" aims of scientific inquiry must be rejected in favor of what might be called a "humanist" conception of such aims. Upon adopting this alternative conception of the proper aims of economic inquiry the economist *qua* economist is seen to be fully entitled to make value judgments concerning policy ends and means.

III

The "Proper" Goals of Economic Inquiry

In recent years an increasing number of philosophers of science, to whom I shall refer as "humanists," have argued that the purist view represents an unduly narrow conception of the proper goals of scientific inquiry. As the humanist sees it, the scientist *qua* scientist is properly concerned not only with the epistemic dimension of inquiry—a concern to construct scientific

theories which enhance our understanding of the world in which we live and which render it intelligible—but also with the more practical or pragmatic dimension arising from a concern to help people realize desirable ends, to enhance the quality of human existence.²¹ According to the humanist, in dissociating the search for knowledge from the search for a better way of life, purism inhibits the development of sciences sensitively responsive to personal and social needs and problems. There would seem to be a number of criticisms which might be levelled against a purist conception of the aims of scientific inquiry and *a fortiori* against the standard view.

In the first place, the question arises as to how the purist can justify restricting the proper goals of scientific enquiry to those of a purely “epistemic” or “cognitive” sort. Recognizing that a necessary condition for attaining epistemic goals is a state of affairs requisite for scientific inquiry to exist and flourish, a concern to achieve such goals exclusively may well be self-vitiating. Such is a consequence of the view set forth by Adolph Lowe. Presumably, Lowe’s economic adviser to the policymaker bent on destroying the German people—required by his science to tell how to do it efficiently—is likewise prohibited from making normative pronouncements *qua* economist even as he advises some madman how to engage in systematic destruction on a global scale.²² This, despite the fact that his neutral course might well result in a complete and permanent halt to the attainment of any epistemic goals whatsoever. Given that a necessary condition for scientific activity is the existence of those human beings who form the basis of scientific communities, there exist circumstances where pursuit of epistemic goals to the neglect of ethical considerations may well result in the non-attainment of those very goals. As Ayres has noted, “all other values depend on existence . . . there are no values to the dead.”²³ Proponents of the standard view do not seem to realize that in the face of circumstances which could hinder or even completely vitiate the attainment of epistemic goals, the economist, not just as a citizen but as a scientist, has a duty to draw attention to such circumstances.

It would seem that the purist’s “internal standards” guiding the construction of scientific theory require an “external” justification. That is to say, questions concerning the “ideal” criteria for the construction of scientific theory cannot be answered independently of judgments concerning the instrumental value of science for fulfilling human needs. Some purists who, like Senior, claim that scientific analysis “does not presuppose any purpose beyond the acquisition of knowledge”,²⁴ seem to suppose that pure scientific knowledge is a self-contained good. It is not at all clear, however, how one might go about justifying the position that attainment of epistemic goals *per*

se is something which is "intrinsically valuable" and thus something which ought to be sought for its own sake. Attempts to justify this sort of view on the grounds that knowledge is "exciting" or "spiritually uplifting," that attaining knowledge "enriches human existence," "satisfies man's curiosity about the world in which he lives," etc., seem to suggest that there are other values that can be placed above knowledge, values which knowledge is instrumental in attaining. Justifying the alleged intrinsic value of knowledge on any such grounds would constitute a *reductio* of the position upheld. The goals of science must be judged with reference to what one wants to *do* with science. On the humanist view we seek to improve our knowledge of the world in which we live so as to make such knowledge available to people, to be of use and of value in their lives. As McLaughlin has argued recently:

The proper goals of science are neither intrinsically justified nor are they rationally justifiable independently of whatever goals are desirable. This means that the determination of the goals which should rationally be sought in science depends upon the determination of the goals which ought to be sought in human life. Science in this very general sense is instrumental. The proper goals of science are those which are instrumental in the achievement of the good life.²⁵

Humanists criticize what they regard as an artificial gulf which purists have set up between the search for "objective" scientific knowledge (so-called "pure" research) and the search for a better way of life, the realization of basic human needs (so-called "applied" research). Since all science is applied science, applied in one way or another in helping individuals achieve fulfilment in their lives, scientists ought to consider more than the efficacy of their theories for attaining merely cognitive goals. Attainment of such goals is not to be regarded as an end in itself but rather as of instrumental value, a stepping stone, a means to more distant ends pertaining to the good life. As the humanist sees it, in restricting the proper aims of science to epistemic goals only, the purist has neglected to ask why we seek to realize these goals, who needs this knowledge?: for what?: what are people's needs, problems? Conceiving human welfare to have both a cognitive dimension involving what might be called "intellectual satisfaction" and a pragmatic dimension relating to man's more material interests, the humanist sees no good reason to exclude the promotion of human welfare, enhancement of the quality of human life, and, indeed, a multitude of practical goals, as legitimate goals of the scientist *qua* scientist. Conceiving scientific problems as an aspect of personal and social problems, humanists measure the intellectual progress of science in terms of the extent to which it provides solutions to problems of both sorts.

A further criticism can be levelled against the claim that the pursuit of

knowledge for the sake of knowledge is a worthwhile activity in its own right, that scientific knowledge is intrinsically valuable apart from its consequences. The criticism is to the effect that there is no internal morality that overrides normal human responsibilities and obligations. Taking something to be immoral, it is either a breach of duty or has avoidable deleterious consequences. Baumrin has argued that doing disinterested science is likely to be immoral.²⁶ Defining the "degree of relevancy of an act" as "the degree of articulable foreseeable consequences of that act with respect to substantial human problems," Baumrin draws attention, in effect, to what the economist would call the "opportunity cost" of pursuing disinterested research.

Since the expenditure of time, energy, wherewithal and talent in one area effectively prevents it being placed elsewhere, the more resources expended in the pursuit of disinterested science, (research having no foreseeable consequences for solving the various problems facing mankind), the less spent on urgent problems such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, urban malaise, the environmental crisis, etc. Doing disinterested science has a cost, then, a cost which is to be measured in terms of the continued frustration of many of the most basic needs, wants and aspirations of human beings. The scientist who pursues science regardless of its relevance to the enhancement of human existence, in effect, turns his back on the world:

In academia the significance of a particular piece of research can be assessed both within the discipline and in the wider arena of human society. To allow the first and ignore the second is unconscionable and without justification.²⁷

Although one cannot demand of the scientist that he foresee every outcome of his inquiry prior to analysis, the scientist, no less than other human beings, has a responsibility to estimate the likely consequences of his actions before initiating them. If to withhold one's contribution to the potential well-being of people deliberately is immoral, then doing science for its own sake is immoral.

The humanist critique of purism is clearly relevant to the question of the tenability of the standard view of the economists. On the basis of the above sorts of considerations it would seem that the purist conception of the proper aims of economic inquiry, a conception underlying the standard view, should be rejected in favor of a humanist conception of those aims. As for any other scientific subdiscipline, the proper goals of economic inquiry are neither intrinsically justifiable nor are they justifiable independently of whatever practical goals are desirable. Since cognitive goals like explanation and prediction are not to be regarded as ends in themselves, but as of instrumental value in fulfilling the fundamental needs and aspirations of human beings, it seems

completely arbitrary to continue to maintain that the economist's concern with promoting such fundamental needs and aspirations is "extra scientific." Such a conclusion gains support once it is appreciated that there is no internal scientific morality that overrides the economist's normal responsibilities and obligations to others.

IV

Conclusion

THE PROBLEM of the proper scope of economic inquiry turns on the question of the proper goals of economic inquiry. Those who claim that the economist *qua* economist makes no value judgments concerning economic and wider social ends misconceive the proper goals of economic inquiry. The narrow purist position underlying the standard view must be rejected in favor of an alternative humanist view, a view which recognizes the scientific investigator's ethical responsibilities to mankind. The economists' value judgments of the sort at issue, contrary to the strict fact/value dualism espoused by many defenders of the standard view, can be grounded in facts concerning the fundamental needs, wants and aspirations of human beings.

Not only does a humanist conception of the goals of economic inquiry provide an epistemological rationale for the claims of political economists that their colleagues should address socially relevant issues but, more importantly, for their claims that economics must be more than a mere science of efficiency or allocation, that it must also be concerned with helping human beings attain "the good life".

In my view the humanist perspective represents an important step in the direction of re-humanizing a social science which seems to have lost sight of the fact that the basic economic agents, idealized in the construct "homo-economicus," are human beings with a multitude of needs, interests and aspirations. This perspective is, thus, a large step toward development of a science of political economy responsive to the basic needs, the problems, the aspirations of people.

Notes

1. L. C. Robbins, *The Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, 2nd ed., (London: Macmillan & Co., 1935), p. 148.

2. Although there is widespread agreement among ethical theorists that one cannot formally deduce evaluative statements from a set of premises which does not contain an evaluative statement, several philosophers have advanced plausible arguments to the effect that certain inferences from purely factual premises to an ethical conclusion are valid by the principles of formal logic alone. See, e.g., J. Searle "How to Derive Ought from Is," *Philosophical Review*, 73 (January,

1964) pp. 43–58, and M. Black, "The Gap Between 'is' and 'should,'" *Philosophical Review* 73 (April, 1964) pp. 165–81. These arguments represent a rejection of even the "weak" form of the alleged fact/value dichotomy.

3. D. C. Rowan *Output, Inflation and Growth* (London: Macmillan, 1975) p. 20.

4. Terence Hutchison, "*Positive*" *Economics and Policy Recommendations* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 52.

5. Perhaps the best known ethical theories falling under this label are nondescriptivist theories such as emotivism, prescriptivism and certain varieties of intuitionism. For a critique of such views see G. J. Warnock, *Contemporary Moral Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

6. C. W. Churchman, *Prediction and Optimal Decision Making: Philosophical Issues of a Science of Values* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), p. 12. A similar attack on the dualist view can be found in G. R. Geiger, "The Place of Values in Economics," *Journal of Philosophy* 27 (June, 1930), pp. 350–61.

7. Although many economists continue to espouse Poppers' falsifiability criterion (e.g. Hutchison in his denial of "scientific status" to value judgments), philosophers of science cannot agree on an adequate demarcation criterion; see: A. Grunbaum, "Is Falsifiability the Touchstone of Scientific Rationality? Karl Popper versus Inductivism," in R. Cohen, et al., eds., *Essays in Memory of Imre Lakatos* (Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel Publishing Co., 1976).

8. M. Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics" in *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 5.

9. Alan Gewirth notes the tendency of those espousing ethical subjectivism to contrast disagreements over "a scientific question" with moral disagreements over "the Ultimate Good" as if these were logically on a par. In comparing scientific with moral disagreement, moral examples involving disagreements over "the Ultimate Good" should be contrasted with disagreement over "the Ultimate Scientific Principle" (which of course is not decidable by cognitive means alone). Gewirth accuses those who use such examples to support their claim that scientific disagreements are cognitively decidable whereas moral disagreements are not, of committing the "fallacy of disparateness," viz. "the fallacy of discussing one field on one level or in one respect and the other field on a quite different level or in a quite different respect" (p. 313). (A. Gewirth, "Positive 'Ethics' and Normative 'Science,'" *Philosophical Review* 69 (July, 1960), pp. 311–30. It seems to me that many a proponent of the standard view has committed the fallacy of disparateness.

10. A. Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare* (San Francisco: Holden Day, 1970), Ch. 5.

11. The decision procedure which I favor is that of Instrumentalists such as John Dewey and Sidney Hook. The crux of the instrumentalist approach is that, in the context of actual ethical problems, ethical premises are always available for resolving disputes and that philosophical difficulties arise only when one ignores the concrete practical contexts in which ethical disagreements occur. Instrumentalists point out that very few of the value judgments that people make are judgments of a basic sort, concerning 'ultimate' ends and that any ethical principle unquestioned in one context, including those which might be thought of as 'ultimate' ends, may be questioned in another. As the Instrumentalist sees it, those who (like Robbins and Friedman) make much of ultimate conflicts of value judgments either do not know or are unwilling to ascertain how these judgments are linked up with objective problems in a determinate context. It is such failure to relate ethical disagreement to the objective problems and situations in which they are always to be found which is at the root of the tendency to multiply conflicts of 'ultimate' ends with such consummate ease. See J. Dewey *The Theory of Valuation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939); S. Hook, *Quest for Being and Other Studies in Naturalism and Humanism*

(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961).

12. Dewey, *ibid*; Hook, *ibid*. See also A. Edel, *Ethical Judgment: The Use of Science in Ethics* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1955).

13. C. Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science," in P. Laslett and W. Runciman, *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, 3rd series (Oxford; Basil Blackwell, 1962). p. 52.

14. R. Allen, "The Idea of a Value-Free Social Science," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 9 (January, 1975), p. 110. I follow those ethical theorists who adhere to the principle that, in deciding what is good or bad for persons, the ultimate criterion can only be their own wants and preferences; cf. J. Harsanyi, "Morality and the Theory of Rational Behavior," *Social Research*, 44 (Winter, 1977), pp. 623–56. Like Harsanyi I believe that any ethical theory which grounds values in facts about human nature must distinguish between a person's 'manifest' preferences, *viz.* those as manifested in his behavior, including preferences possibly based on erroneous factual beliefs or strong emotions which hinder rational choice, and his 'true' preferences, *viz.* those he *would* have if he had all the relevant information and reasoned with the greatest possible care in a state of mind most conducive to rational choice. Harsanyi takes a person's rational wants as those consistent only with his 'true' preferences. Although at this time there exists no formal criterion for drawing this distinction, when I talk of human needs, aspirations etc., I have in mind the 'true' preferences of human beings.

15. My position is not anti-theoretical—I am well aware that the potential pragmatic benefits of much research are dependent upon deeper theoretical understanding of the phenomena under study. Adoption of a humanist conception of the aims of economic inquiry, which I argue for, entails, however, that the economist, in selecting problems for analysis must weigh up the potential pragmatic benefits as well as the potential epistemic benefits of the answers forthcoming.

16. See, *e.g.*, J. Spengler, "Have Values a Place in Economics?" *Ethics*, 44 (April, 1934), pp. 313–31.

17. J. Rawls, "Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics," *Philosophical Review* 62 (April, 1951), p. 178.

18. I am not claiming that the economists' value judgments concerning economic objectives and policy measures are superior to those of the non-economist simply because he possesses greater knowledge of the functional relationships obtaining between economic phenomena. The possession of expert knowledge does not *per se* endow the economist with any special ethical intuition on the basis of which he can expound his conception of the good life. I am simply claiming that since factual knowledge is a *necessary condition* of competent moral judgment, the economist is very often in a privileged position to make such judgments. For a vigorous defense of this point of view, see M. Scriven, "Science, Fact and Value" in S. Morgenbesser, ed., *Philosophy of Science Today* (New York: Basic Books, 1967).

19. Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

20. Purists regard scientific inquiry as a search for 'interesting' or 'informative' truth, *viz.*, the attainment of an increasingly reliable, extensive and theoretically systematized body of information about the world in which we live. A leading purist, Isaac Levi, takes epistemic utilities such as explanatory power, predictive content, simplicity, systematizing power and so on as determinants of the informational values of rival hypotheses. See his "Induction and the Aims of Inquiry" in S. Morgenbesser, P. Suppes, M. White, eds., *Philosophy, Science and Method* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969).

21. See, *e.g.*, R. Rudner, "The Scientist *qua* Scientist Makes Value Judgments," *Philosophy of Science* 20 (January, 1953), pp. 1–6; J. Leach, "Explanation and Value Neutrality," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 19 (May, 1968), pp. 93–103; N. Maxwell, *What's Wrong with*

Science: Toward a People's Science of Delight and Compassion (London: Bran's Head Books, 1976). According to the humanist view the scientist *qua* scientist properly makes value judgments even in assessing the merits of competing theoretical constructs. For an argument to the effect that the economist *qua* economist makes value judgments in the context of justification of economic theory see Larry Dwyer, "The Alleged Value Neutrality of Economics: An Alternative View," *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol 16, March, 1982.

22. Interestingly, Albert Speer's response to Hitler's *Götterdämmerung* order was to plan the dictator's assassination!

23. C. E. Ayres, "Values: Ethical and Economic," *International Journal of Ethics*. 44 (April, 1934). p. 454.

24. N. W. Senior, *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*. 1860, p. 183.

25. A. McLaughlin, "Science, Reason and Value," *Theory and Decision*. 1 (1970), p. 136.

26. B. Baumrin, "The Immorality of Irrelevance: The Social Role of Science," in F. Kortzen, et al., eds., *Psychology and the Problems of Society*. (Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association Inc., 1970).

27. E. Meehan, "A Comedy of Errors—But Not Funny," *Social Science Quarterly*. 58 (March, 1978), p. 544.

In Memory of George Orwell

AMONG THE GREAT BOOKS of all time—the treasures of our western culture—are several by George Orwell, particularly *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*. Those who value individual freedom hold Orwell's name in affectionate reverence: in these works he struck blows for human liberty that one day, along with the works of like-minded spirits, will liberate people everywhere from the chains of ignorance, outmoded dogma and undemocratic authority.

Orwellians all will be pleased to learn that the 34th anniversary of Orwell's death and the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will be marked by the University of Akron's Institute for Future Studies and Research with a major conference with this title:

"Toward 2019, After 1984, What Futures for Political Authority, Personal Freedom and Civic Culture?"

The conference will be held on the Akron campus January 20–22, 1984. The distinguished economic researcher, Dr. Gary Gappert, is director of the institute (Akron, OH 44325). He invites suggestions for the issues that might be considered.

W.L.