

Reason, Again

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Just as human reason assesses a correct conclusion as “positive” according to its own scale (that is, according to the scale of reason)—i.e., just as reason affirms correct conclusions, judges them to be consistent with reason, judges them to reflect reason, and judges them to be in alignment with itself, and *vice versa*—and assesses an incorrect conclusion as “negative” according to its own scale; so also (similarly) human reason assesses human life (using the term generically) as “positive” according to its own scale and assesses the cessation/extinction of life as “negative” according to its own scale.

Similarly, just as human reason assesses the absence of contradiction (or call it the presence of integrity, coherence, consistency) as “positive” according to its own scale (that is, according to the scale of reason)—i.e., just as reason affirms integrity and coherence, judges them to be consistent with reason, judges them to reflect reason, and judges them to be in alignment with itself, and *vice versa*—and assesses contradiction as “negative” according to its own scale; so also (similarly) human reason assesses human life (using the term generically) as “positive” according to its own scale and assesses the cessation/extinction of life as “negative” according to its own scale.

(It helps to understand the various basic relationships between the human brain-mind, human cognition, and “human reason”, and human life, informed by scientific understanding, although it’s beyond the scope of this message to even try to go into those things.)

Please forgive the brevity and the context-less and perhaps less-than-self-explanatory nature of these two paragraphs. I explain and defend the essential point in a number of earlier materials, most of which are on my website and some of which I’ve announced on Philos-L and Chora, submitted selectively to a few conferences, and so forth.

Please also forgive the fact that (for convenience only) I’ve phrased these paragraphs, presently, as if “human reason” is an active agent. I’ve never met

anyone or anything named “human reason”, of course, so this is just a communications device. If you like, you can think of these paragraphs as if they say something more like: “Just as a human with a fully informed and proper understanding of ‘human reason’, applying the tool of human reason properly to the matter at hand, according to the scale of human reason, would assess the ...”.

Please also understand that, by referring to ‘human reason’, I’m talking about the full sense of the term. If a person approaches the matter with a specific narrower (and/or incompletely informed) definition of ‘reason’ in mind, then we can (if one prefers) think of what I’m talking about as “excellent human cognition, excellently applied”, or something like that. In other words, I’m not so much interested in definitions and dissections, carving nature and ourselves at arbitrary joints and then overlooking the fact that we’ve done so. Instead, I’m interested in facts, relationships between real things and the concepts that refer to them, and understanding.

Also, to be clear, I’m not talking about choices or decisions or assessments that an individual person—a whole human being, complete with all of her cognitive-emotional-and-other faculties—could or might or would make based on the interrelated and combined application of all of her faculties, tools, and influences taken together (‘reason’, ‘emotion’, and so forth) in light of her specific characteristics and values, the specific circumstances she faces, the specific options she has, and the specific futures she might imagine. For example, I’m not talking about the question of suicide that individuals face as individuals. Instead, the topic involves the nature, characteristics, functions, limits, credible and informed uses, invalid uses, and so forth of “human reason”, properly understood in light of modern understanding.

On another noteworthy topic, it was Bob Dylan’s 70th birthday yesterday, Tuesday 24 May.

Thanks for your consideration, and Be Well!

Jeff

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