



Why Science Can't Determine Moral Values: A Reply to Sam Harris' The Moral Landscape

John Mumm

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In *The Moral Landscape*, Sam Harris argues that morality is, contrary to widespread belief, an undeveloped branch of science. In order to make his case, Harris thinks it is necessary to overturn the prevailing view that facts and values are distinct. It is this view, he thinks, which has led to both religious dogmatism and cultural relativism regarding moral truth. In this essay, philosopher John Mumm argues that Harris has failed to call into question the distinction between facts and values, and hence has failed to make room for a science of normative morality. Scientific inquiry regarding human well-being is morally relevant, but does not directly address fundamental moral questions. Mumm begins by suggesting that Harris misrepresents the current state of the debate. He then argues that Harris fails to adequately support a crucial and controversial premise in his argument, the claim that moral questions are questions about maximizing well-being. Finally, he argues that nothing Harris says sheds serious doubt on the distinction between facts and values. According to Mumm, moral questions are properly addressed by scientifically informed philosophy.

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