



SAMŚAYA EVAM PRAMĀ

THE TELIC NORMATIVITY OF EPISTEMOLOGY

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- A. All achievements are bound to be attempts that succeed, but the converse is false. Success by luck rather than competence need not be achievement. However, there are many ways in which a successful performance can be lucky without falling short in the slightest as an achievement.
- B. Achievement requires success that is *apt*: through competence rather than luck. This emerges from a review of telic theory's five main phenomena: *attempt*, *success*, *competence*, *aptness*, *achievement*.
- C. When generalized to all attempts, of whatever sort, that is an account of the telic normativity of attempts as attempts, in terms of their accuracy, adroitness, and aptness.

And there is a connection with credit of a certain sort, *telic* credit, where a success is thus "creditable" to someone if it is *attributable* to them, without necessarily importing any more substantive axiological standing. A shot that constitutes a "perfect" murder may be an excellent shot,

one thus creditable to its agent, while constituting an abominable crime, not to his *moral* credit.

- D. Surely the archer deserves full credit so long as his arrow is *in fact* unaffected by wind on the way to the target, no matter how likely a spoiler gust may have been.

That being so, it emerges that the relevant "situation" is not a *modal* property of the spatio-temporal volume involved. Success in hitting the target across the relevant space is quite unlikely at that time, despite our archer's excellent skill and shape. What makes



success so unlikely is the high risk (by hypothesis) of a spoiler gust. However, so long as no spoiler gust *in fact* comes along, our archer enjoys the complete competence required for creditable, apt success.

Apt performance, including apt epistemic performance, is not dependent on how safely one *possesses* relevant competence. This applies to all three sorts of competence: first, the (innermost) skill; second, the skill plus the required inner shape; third, the skill and shape, in turn, plus the required situation. None of these varieties of competence need be *safely* in place. The safety that *does* seem required for apt performance, including apt judgment and belief, is rather the SSS- relative safety constituted by the fact that one is (actually, however luckily) SSS-competent enough, so that, if one tried *when thus SSS-competent*, then one would likely enough succeed.

A. Here again are the five main ideas of our account: they are those of *attempt*, *success*, *competence*, *aptness*, and *achievement*.

Archery not only provides an example of a telic triple-a normativity constituted by those five ideas. It also shows how achievement comes in degrees within two dimensions. One dimension is that of the apt shot, accurate *because* adroit. The other is that of the *fully* apt shot, where the agent aims not just at accuracy but at aptness and succeeds through competence in this more complex endeavor.

B. If a shot is too risky, it is ill-advised. A shot can attain quality *in the specific regard of being well selected*. A well selected shot can thus rate higher in that regard than one that falls short through pertinent negligence or recklessness.

A dimension of second-order evaluation of Diana's shot thus involves more than its aptness, its success through (first-order) competence. Also relevant is whether the attempt is well selected so as to avoid recklessness, and even negligence.

When successfully enough guided that way, an attempt rises to the level of the *fully apt*. Nothing short of this will suffice for *achievement full well*. If an attempt succeeds aptly without being fully apt, there is an element of relevant luck in its success. Its aptness is not secured through the guidance of the agent's second-order competence. It is thus lucky that the agent succeeds aptly. And this sort of luck reduces or blocks credit to the agent for their success, as it reduces or blocks credit to the agent for the aptness of their success.

E. Going beyond virtue theory in general, here is a main thesis of virtue *epistemology*:



that the normativity of knowledge is a special case of such telic normativity.

Knowledge is thus a central sort of epistemic achievement. Here we find the traditional issues of skepticism, and other issues of the nature, scope, and value of knowledge.

Gettier cases may now be seen as ones in which the epistemic agent falls short either because their pertinent belief falls short of aptness altogether, or because it falls short of *full* aptness.

F. An alethic affirmation might be just a guess, as when a contestant tries to affirm the correct answer to a quiz show question. But an oncologist would aim not just to guess but to affirm competently, indeed *aptly*. Only an alethic affirmation can amount to a judgment, which it can do only if it aims not just at truth but also at aptness. This yields the following hierarchy.

Saying: of “p” Affirmation: saying that p Alethic affirmation: endeavor (attempt) to get it right by affirming that p

Judgment: endeavor (attempt) to get it right *aptly* by alethically affirming that p

G. In the domain of action in general, not just epistemic action, we find a “forbearance” that amounts to *intentional omission*. Here two varieties can be distinguished through the following formulation:

Forbearing from X’ing in the endeavor to attain an aim A.

Where might parentheses go into that formulation?
Here are two options:

Narrow-scope: (Forbearing from X’ing) in the endeavor to attain a given aim A.

Broad-scope: Forbearing from (X’ing in the endeavor to attain a given aim A).

When one faces judgmentally a question whether p, one deliberates on whether to affirm alethically (positively or negatively) or suspend (intentionally omitting alethic affirmation). Judgment on whether p would require aiming for *apt* alethic affirmation. So, competent pursuit of that aim would require aiming to affirm only if one (likely



enough) would affirm aptly. One puts oneself in the appropriate shape and situation and approaches the question with the required skill so that one affirms only if one would do so aptly. That is part of what proper inquiry involves; one must aim to satisfy that conditional. And this is half of our biconditional objective: to affirm (positively or negatively), on the question whether p, if and only if one would thereby affirm aptly. (In abbreviated form, the objective is: to affirm re <p?> iff one would affirm aptly.)

- H.** A desirable level of human knowledge is the *fully apt alethic affirmation*. That is a further dominant aim of inquiry. When we inquire, we adopt certain subsidiary aims in the endeavor to attain our dominant aims. Such knowledge is thus a (telic) norm of inquiry; it constitutes a desirable sort of success in inquiry. It thus provides a (main) norm of judgment, whether public or private. And it is thus not only a norm of *judgment*, but also a norm of *suspension*.
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Notes:

- ¹ This was the keynote address to the International Conference on *Samśaya Evaṁ Pramā, Doubt and Knowledge-Indian and Western Perspectives*, organized by Department of Philosophy, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, from 15th to 17th March, 2019. Prof. Sosa obliged us by presenting the key tenets of Virtue Epistemology, in his talk.

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