

Thought . . . to the Purpose

“Consider a discipline such as aesthetics. The fact that there are works of art is given for aesthetics. It seeks to find out under what conditions this fact exists, but it does not raise the question whether or not the realm of art is perhaps a realm of diabolical grandeur, a realm of this world, and therefore, in its core, hostile to God and, in its innermost and aristocratic spirit, hostile to the brotherhood of human. Hence, aesthetics does not ask whether there *should* be works of art.”

—Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation”

It has ever been the discomfort of serious thought to observe the otherwise universal equation of natural events and human actions. And it is not an irony that the equalizing has not rendered human behavior a natural force, with no more moral significance than a hurricane, or sunshine, for our willfulness has never been delivered to doubt. Rather, it has inflated our thoughts to the stature of the commandments of a god, and everything human becomes as much a *given* as is nature itself. We become as unquestionable as gospel.

There is no comprehensive scientific view of human nature, for science can inquire only the *how* of things, not the *why*—it takes what it probes as given—and we are always at the wrong end of the microscope. If philosophy has any lingering function, if there is any role for it that science has not appropriated, it is to ask questions science cannot address. It is to engage the “should” factor.

Aesthetics has been something of the “science” of art, in that it has inquired into what it would not judge, or, more to the point, it judged works of art as examples of something it would not think to judge—art itself, art *per se*. Hence, every individual judgment a *non sequitur*. And thus, *Hyperion* is dedicated to asking the unasked questions, to thinking what has been the unthinkable, to engaging the “should” factor: should art continue to exist, and why, works of art should be phenotypes of precisely what, should art be transformed into something unrecognizable, or, should it be relegated to the scrap heap of history.