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Universal Desire Theory:

An Account of Objective Subjectivity

As a philosopher, citizen, and human being, I attempt with the utmost tact to be a morally positive force in the world, regardless of whether or not there is an absolute, mind-independent law that constitutes the moral worth of the plethora of actions I choose to commit as I wander throughout my day. Discovering the ontological qualification of my personal moral system is a worthy philosophical pursuit within itself, yet I must admit that the primary conscious intention behind the slamming of my keyboard is the grade that this incessant quandarizing shall receive. The question I aim to riposte in this paper is as follows: Is there a basis for an objective ethical framework? Aside from having nuanced definitions still at play when I write them, the terms objective, universal, essentialist, absolute, and mind-independent, will be used with relative synonymity.¹ The concept linguistically accounted for by these words can be described as one of the two ontological categories phenomena are typically placed into. The opposing category *subjective*, is likewise more or less synonymous with the terms mind-dependent, relative, and individuated. The majority of ethical theorists hold steadfast to one of these categories, either polemicizing that the basis for normativity exists objectively across all rational² actors, or that this basis is devoid of meaning at best, non-existent at worst, and entirely subjective. One of their primary points of disagreement lies in whether or not the subjective normative concepts within the

¹ Adjectively referring to specific subjects, “universal” means all-encompassing, impartial, or equally applied. “Essentialist” denotes a fixed or constant essence. “Absolute” can harbor a divine connotation, but generally describes totality and independence, perfectly leading to “mind-independent,” which designates the ontological category of matter as opposed to idea, a distinction that will be further elaborated.

² Some theorists do not place rationality as a necessary prerequisite to morality, but this is a general trend among both objectivists and subjectivists.

minds of individuals supervene onto anything universally perceivable, and it is through this quandary that I shall abandon the notion that either interlocutor is closer to the truth, by constructing a bridge between their prima facie opposing views, upon which we just might be able to save the truth from evading us with one final extension of its legs. After establishing that all organisms capable of action necessarily comprehend normativity as a universally applicable phenomenon, I shall have to elucidate what exactly the basis for universal normativity is founded upon, which I believe to be the three ends desired by all organisms down to the cell: collaboration, safety, and happiness.

To further preface the following essay, I must briefly address the endlessly rich debate between Material Realism and Pure Idealism, within which there are significant arguments respectively posited for or against the mind-independent existence of matter. The ontological status of matter itself, while fascinating to ponder over a fresh bowl of philosopher's leaf, is inconsequential to the formulation of perceiver-object relationships inherent to my theory, since objects are conceptualized regardless of their possible separation from the sense data the mind uses to conceive of them. I don't believe that ultimate existence can be neutrally perceived by any conscious being, as the external world is necessarily filtered through their subjective worldview and conceptual apparatus, to the effect that two beings can experience *the same event*³ with completely distinct feelings and interpretations of it. This does not mean however, that acting beings do not universally share the relevant capacities to generally agree on the effective significance of certain events, regardless of the ultimate ontological status of matter. What I am concerned with in this endeavor is the perceptual impact of events and objects, phenomena that are universally perceivable whether or not they are ultimately qualified as material substances or

³ Again, whether or not any event experienced by two distinct beings can be numerically identical is a problem for the Pure Idealists and Material Realists to solve.

shared ideas. Another concern worthy of prefacing is the possible challenge posed by Solipsism, which is the theory of consciousness that only one mind, the solipsist's mind, exists. A helpful modern characterization of this view could be defining it in terms of the highest degree of *main character syndrome* that one can possess, wherein all external organisms are mere non-player characters of some kind, programs, or zombies, as David Chalmers calls these dubious other minds. Within this inquiry, I will also be operating off of the assumption that other minds exist and possess internal states similar to the states I experience, since the verification of Solipsism would undermine the foundation of all normativity, and the proving of this theory is a metaphysical venture far more monumental than even the task of the Pure Idealist. Now that I have sidestepped Pure Idealism and Solipsism as efficiently as my fingers⁴ could maneuver my arguments around their glowing keyboard, I shall attempt to build the aforementioned bridge between objectivity and subjectivity, chasing the truth to whatever ledges it tries to climb.

Does the standard for an objective ethical framework have to exist outside of the subjectively constructed internal worldview of a perceiving being to be considered objective?⁵ If all of the agents within an environment⁶ possess subjective internal worlds, or neurological categorizations of external reality, that are universally similar enough to share the capacity for basic ontological agreements, the basis of which includes an understanding of causality, object permanence, and self-other distinction, then there will be events existent along the infinitely retraceable chain of material cause and effect whose veridicality can be generally agreed upon due to their logically verifiable and repeatable nature. These events are typically referred to as objectively real, as facts, or as physical points of motion taking place independently of any being's

⁴ Or at least what I sense to be my fingers!

⁵ The term objective is derived from the word object, which quite literally means thing. The typical usage of "objective" implies an independence from opinion, a fact.

⁶ Or society where complex social creatures like humans are concerned.

perception of them, or at least delivering data of a similar enough quality to elicit general responses to them.⁷ When an apple falls from a tree, the expansive majority of conscious beings in auditory proximity experience the falling apple in the same way relative to their species' size and sensory toolkit, for a human,⁸ it is perceived auditorily as a soft thud in the grass. The witnesses could turn and say, "Hear that? An apple fell!" Do moral claims work this same way? Can the ethical quality of an action be objectively known or written like a sound wave can be measured with a decibel or recorded on a microphone? To accomplish this monumental feat, one must sing the tale of what and where that ethical sound wave is, and how a moral actor is made privy to it. Are these headphones of comparison found in Plato's realm of divine ideas? Somewhere in the 99.9% identical DNA of each and every Homo Sapien? In this paper, I shall attempt to convince you that the metaphysical grounding of the objective ethical system located within the midst of the vastly disparate and individual psyche of each human being, can be found in the physical relationships between perceiving beings and the external objects surrounding them, that are formed, maintained, and broken in such a way that although two perceivers may have directly opposing judgments regarding an objective material event,⁹ the vast preponderance of beings capable of perceiving the event will agree on it having happened. Because even the magnanimous frontline nurse and the tyrannical wager of war, with rare exception, experience the same range of sense impressions based

⁷ Again, these events may just be points of motion that are similarly conceptualized within the minds of all beings who perceive them, but as I made clear in paragraph two, their ultimate ontology is inconsequential to their objectivity, as they are either mind-independent and objective in the typical meaning of the term, or are universally similar mind-dependent conceptions and thus are objective by virtue of their universality within all subjective worldviews.

⁸ I use the human sense of hearing here because it is the most digestible example of sense perception for the human mind to understand. The umwelten (sensed environment) of non-human organisms often display events and objects in ways that approach the limits of what we can imagine sense data to be like. *An Immense World* by Ed Yong is a powerful source on this topic. Non-human organisms play a large role in my theory, as will be developed later.

⁹ This disparity in interpretation is born from a near infinitude of causes, the explication of which is a topic deserving of its own separate inquiry. Immediate examples include hallucination, conceptual blockages enforced by lifetimes of accumulated confirmation bias, and the varying efficacy of individual sensory modalities, just to name a few.

on their temporo-spatial relationships to the physical objects in their environment, these agents respectively possess a near equal capacity to understand the directly consequential effect of the conscious modification of their relationships to surrounding objects. The objective events that take place in response to any conscious action performed by one of these sufficiently capable agents, is imbued with a moral value due to the potential for intentionally actualized harm¹⁰ associated with shifts in perceiver-object relationships. Consciously enacted events such as the rock thrown from Cain's hand can be distinguished from intentionless motions of matter like a tsunami, by the positive or negative presence of conscious intention behind them, born of their capacity to understand the consequences of said actions, or their lack thereof. Even though the tsunami may have harmed an incalculable amount of organisms compared to Cain's single slain brother, the tsunami is an *unintelligent force of nature*, and thus lacked the propensity to have chosen not to ravage the coastline. Cain is an intelligent, perceiving being who comprehended the causal relationship between rocks and skulls, consequently willing the death of his brother to be the outcome of his inflicted rock-to-skull collision. Thus, *unintelligent forces of nature* are amoral, only having secondary normative claims¹¹ placed upon them by the organisms they affect, while *intelligent agents of nature* have objective moral values dependent on the biologically objective harm or benefit their necessarily intentional actions affect.¹²

Having thus far established that all beings capable of informed action necessarily understand the ends they wish to achieve, as well as the causal chain of events they must affect in order to attain such ends, one who is skeptical of objective normativity can agree with this phenomenological account of action without being convinced that moral claims are anything other

¹⁰ Harm will be explicitly defined as the privation of universal ends later in the paper.

¹¹ The distinction between primary and secondary normative claims is elucidated by Philippa Foot in her book *Natural Goodness*.

¹² A potential grey area here is the accidental nature of some actions, especially those perpetrated by children or persons of irregular consciousness such as hallucinating individuals. This topic will be breached later in the paper.

than culturally relative internal dispositions experienced and expressed as emotions and preferences, and since I have not yet accounted for the natural objectivity of harm and benefit, they are justified in remaining Pyhrronistic.¹³ For one might include Cain in the natural amorality of the tsunami, arguing that his act of murder was just as natural as any weather event or occurrence of the food chain, and normative claims are merely applied to these events as a consequence of the evolutionarily anomalous emergence of rational consciousness within human beings. I agree with this esteemed interlocutor that normativity is conceptually applied to the world by conscious beings, however, the objects of this conceptual application can either be intelligent or unintelligent, either tracking an actual moral value stemming from the intentional infliction of harm or benefit, or applying a normative value to an event based on its unwilled effects. This second kind of moral judgment is similar to what Philippa Foot, in her book *Natural Goodness*, titles secondary goodness. This distinction separates consciously willed actions from unconscious effects of nature, placing natural normativity exclusively in the former category. This conscious intelligence mandatory for natural normativity is evidenced by an organism's propensity for action in itself, as the ability to act not only requires comprehension of causality and the ends to which said actions are directed, but these ends are necessarily in line with an agent's subjective formulation¹⁴ of the good¹⁵, which can align with their objective good to varying degrees, but is always motivated by the universal ends of biological desire. What is objectively good for an organism, and consequently for a human being, can be discovered within the convergence of what all organisms universally

¹³ Pertaining to the ephectic Ancient Greek school of Pyhrrro, who's devout skepticism has remained heavily influential to this day.

¹⁴ Some animals, human and non-human, derive intense pleasure from the torture of other beings, thus subjectively viewing this practice to be good for them. Not only does this action contradict the Principle of Biological Equality which will be elucidated later, but deprives the torturer of potential benefit available within a more complete understanding of their objective biological good, as they may attain pleasure from the torture, but significantly decrease their capacity for collaboration, safety, and happiness. Pleasure's phenomenological distinction from happiness will be developed further.

¹⁵ The Good is the subjective classification of desirable external objects and events conceived of in all acting beings, similar enough among all organisms to warrant an objective explanation.

value out of biological necessity, and the evolved methods of attaining and sustaining survival and flourishing inherent to specific species according to the food chain. A synthesis of the works *Natural Goodness* and *Good For and Good About* by illustrious moral essentialists Philippa Foot and Jenny Teichman results in the distinction between what is “‘good *for*’ and ‘good *about*’” an organism, wherein natural normativity arises from the universally valued ends of collaboration, safety, and happiness (good *for*), as well as the effective or defective functional capacities that contribute to the attainment of these ends (good *about*). These two classes of good are the biological groundwork of each organism’s subjective conception of the good, or the desirable, as all actions moral or otherwise spring from either the promotion or privation of these ends. Although each organism conceives of and attains these ends with functional qualities unique to their species, especially where the diverse lives of humans are concerned, all actions are motivated by the desire for these ends, regardless of an agent’s acknowledgement that they are. I cannot construe an example of an organism that does not desire these three natural ends, for even solitary animals reproduce, which is an action motivated by an intrinsic desire for in-species connection, an end that is a universal factor within all animal’s environmentally dependent conception of the good. All organisms value safety and avoid unnecessary danger, to the extent that even suicide committed by any animal of sufficient intelligence is a move to escape a situation that they perceive to be more dangerous than death. And happiness, whether defined as merely the healthy regulation¹⁶ of neurotransmitters or the abstraction that rational beings place upon this very same phenomenon, not only directly follows from the attainment of collaboration and safety, but is

¹⁶ Happiness is distinct from pleasure in this way, as one can experience much pleasure through dangerous means of releasing neurotransmitters, whilst lacking the healthy regulation of pleasure that is conducive to happiness. At and near the bottom of the Spectrum of Consciousness, simple life such as single celled organisms as well as the cells themselves lack the equipment to experience any thing similar to this definition of happiness, but certainly experience the microscopic equivalent once they have completed the necessary functions to ensure their survival. Cellular happiness may sound strange at first, but granting that it is quite literally a the most miniscule signal indicating the completion of a task, it is not so absurd.

desirable of its own accord in beings who can conceive of it separately.¹⁷ Thus, universal benefit, or objective good can be quantified as the promotion of these ends and the instruments or functional capacities by which an organism attains them, and universal harm or objective bad as the privation of these ends and the means by which an organism attains them. To use more philosophically acute normative language, a moral agent, which is an organism capable of understanding the consequences of their actions, ought to promote collaboration, safety, and happiness within itself, its species¹⁸, as well as the means to secure these ends, and ought not to deprive themselves or fellow members of their species from these universally desired biological necessities. Organisms have a naturally normative obligation to secure these ends within beings outside of their species as well, but only to the extent that it is biologically possible within the *unintelligent force of nature* that is the food chain. War and territorial violence between organisms of the same species is a biological necessity as well due to the survivalist pressure caused by limited resources, but this will be accounted for by the Principle of Biological Equality.

Collaboration, safety, and happiness are universal ends experienced through perceiver-object relationships, such as an organism's physical¹⁹ proximity to their family, shelter, and positive feelings following the attainment of their subjective good, which is necessarily constructed of desires for collaboration, safety, and the happiness that follows the attainment of the former two ends in the form of released neurotransmitters, or the higher abstraction associated

¹⁷ Humans for example, can attain happiness in absence of collaboration and safety, through practices like intense meditation. Or if what is attained through meditation is distinct from happiness, humans are able to further abstract the notion of happiness into contentment, definable as external behavioral evidence of happiness in the absence of sufficiently acquired needs.

¹⁸ The inclusion of an organism's species is crucial here, as the inter-species ladder of death known as the food chain is a necessary force of nature that can only be consciously evaded by humans and some domesticated animals through the act of suicide, thus the privation of the three natural ends are necessarily inflicted upon other species by the vast majority of the animal kingdom (arguably humans too since suicide is not a viable decision to ensure survival), and it is a strange consequence to deny the capacity for morality to beings who are just engaging in survival.

¹⁹ Since I am operating off of the assumption that mental states supervene onto physical states, this use of the phrase "physical proximity" includes the perceiver's mental relationships to these objects.

with this phenomenon that is possible in superiorly conscious beings. Since each organism worthy of ethical consideration is equally capable of perceiving these ontological relationships, every actor capable of processing sensory data is of equal concern to the objective events taking place in the world. If a bullet is fired point blank at any agent of perception, from the praying mantis to the praying man, the consciously inflicted shift of relationship between the brass and the agent's body causes harm in proportion to the myriad of other objects and physical connections at play, a process that each agent can comprehend to the extent that they choose to enact and react to these shifts.²⁰ The moral measurements that can be taken in this situation exist within the perceptual links tying each perceiver to the surrounding objects responsible for inducing a specific degree of benefit or harm to the perceiver; that is calculated based on the increase or decrease of their felt sense of collaboration, safety, and happiness. Again, within this framework a natural disaster could never be morally blamed, as inanimate objects have no understanding of the aforementioned ontological structure of the cosmos, and are therefore incapable of cognizant action.

Now the following question arises: Which organisms are to be included as moral agents worthy of ethical consideration, both in the inactive and active sense?²¹ To construct my taxonomy of ethical consideration, I shall operate within the confines of the phenomenology of action I espoused in the beginning of the essay. If all actions require their actor to possess some basic understanding of both an end to which the action is directed as well as the specific causal chain of

²⁰ In other words, reaction is evidence of sentience, and the severity of reaction is in indication of the inflicted action's influential weight. This is why cells can be called conscious in a limited sense, as they respond to perceived external stimuli just as we do, only their possible reactions are infinitesimal in comparison.

²¹ Inactive ethical consideration refers to the inclusion of an organism in moral calculations; whether or not and how much their experienced benefit and harm counts towards a dilemmic decision. Active ethical consideration refers to the inclusion of an organism as a being capable of ethical consideration itself; whether or not they consider the experienced benefit and harm of other beings when acting, or whether or not they encounter dilemmas. To phrase the distinction more succinctly, inactive ethical consideration determines which organisms can be included in natural normativity, while active ethical consideration determines which organisms can conceive of natural normativity themselves.

inflicted events necessary for the achievement of this end, and all organisms necessarily act in accordance with their evolutionary drive to sustain their existence,²² then it follows that all organisms are conscious in at least their propensity for action. It follows further that the scope of an organism's propensity for action is dependent on their level of biological complexity,²³ as well as the available options within their environment, thus consciousness exists as a spectral ladder of intricacy-dependent emergence predicated on an organism's ability to act.²⁴ Human beings rest at the top of this ladder, adjacent to our position on the food chain, as the only beings capable of abstractly reasoning about our biological drives, creating art and philosophy as certain *sui generis* evidence. This capacity of abstraction allows us the widest scope of potential actions as the primary creative agents of planet Earth, including the conceptualization of normativity, which regardless of how poorly we observe it, exists as an *a priori* natural law. Despite the various descending rungs of awareness non-human organisms act from within, every acting being down to the very cells that construct all organismal life are worthy of both inactive and active ethical consideration by virtue of their universally shared ends of collaboration, safety, and happiness, as well as their ability to recognize the benefit and harm associated with the promotion and privation of these ends within their own being and the acting beings surrounding them.²⁵ For one to deny this conclusion, they must first deny that organisms desire to survive and flourish, then that they strive for and avoid specific events in accordance with these desires, then that they even perceive these events in the

²² This existence sustaining drive is facilitated by the universal desires for collaboration, safety, and happiness.

²³ Especially concerning their neural and nervous systems.

²⁴ I deem this the Spectrum of Consciousness Principle.

²⁵ Again, the cell is verily unable to understand the consequences of its actions beyond the specific effects they inflict on the cellular versions of collaboration, safety, and happiness. Cells mend themselves and work together with other cells according to their biologically necessary desire for collaboration, understanding in the most limited way possible that they *ought* to survive, and thus *ought* to collaborate and reproduce. Cells protect themselves and their cellularly collaborative relationships according to their innate desire for safety, and thus equally understand the privation of this end they inflict on their cellular enemies when they attack them. Finally, as developed earlier, cellular happiness is quantified as the signal responsible for indicating the attainment of collaboration and safety.

first place, since perception of external stimuli necessitates responsive action towards it, even if this is the plant inspired method of Wuwei.²⁶

A further issue with this theory rests in the fact that nature is insidiously brutal, requiring organisms to inter-specially kill and consume each other in line with the evolutionarily necessary food chain in order to continue their existence. This inescapable natural reality only grows more brutal the higher a hunted and killed organism exists on the Spectrum of Consciousness, due to their correlatively increased capacity to conceptualize suffering and death. One may reasonably ask how normativity can exist at all if it is impossible not to cause harm. Following this train of thought as 17-year-old me did, it is easy to come to the conclusion that survival in itself is inherently unethical, and the only moral decision one can make, especially in the ever-exploitative post-industrial West, is to commit Seppuku. This position is not only untenable for a multitude of practical reasons, but it is not the sole conclusion one can arrive at in response to the food chain objection to Universal Desire Theory. Inflicted death appears to be an inescapable fact of life, and since the privation of safety is an objective evil within this framework, all beings, by virtue of consuming distinct life, could not even hypothetically be morally good, as the Zachmanean sage would have to starve themselves to death in order to remain free of this masticatory sin. If this theory has any weight to it at all, one could expect to see some semblance of synchronicity between it and the various ethical traditions of the world, yet every moral exemplar arriving to my symposium of consideration ate food. Both Jesus Christ and Socrates ended up dead proving their commitment to their respective ethical theories, but neither one died of starvation.

To respond to this concern, that appears to necessitate that even Jesus Christ would be considered unethical by my system simply because he consumed other organisms to survive, the

²⁶ A Daoist principle of non-action in accordance with the inevitable proceedings of nature.

Zachmanean must ponder the food chain in the same manner as the tsunami, as a force of nature that is amoral so long as it is respectfully²⁷ reacted to by the beings it affects and not had its inescapable amoral harm exacerbated by positive²⁸ or negative excessive responses. Even after an excessive reaction is enacted, the immoral normative value stems from the *intelligent agent that willed it*, not the *unintelligent force* the agent reacted to. In the case of the tsunami, a positive excessive response could look like spending every waking minute of one's life in constant preparation for the next big wave, leaving no time for collaboration and happiness due to one's neurotic obsession with safety. A negative excessive response would be a lack of action in response to the disaster, either manifested as insignificant preparation for future tsunamis, or the complete withdrawal of one's will to live and the consequent taking of one's own life. Following the comparison to the food chain, an excessive positive reaction to the natural fact that killing and consuming the nutrients hidden inside the beings on one's evolutionary menu is the only means of fulfilling hunger would be torturing those beings before they are consumed, or killing more than was necessary for the continuation of one's life. An excessive negative reaction to the horrors of the food chain would be the ineffective attempt to kill one's prey leading to elongated suffering for both the hunter and hunter-ed, or the complete cessation of consumption, necessarily leading to suicide by starvation, as was the practice of several cults throughout history.²⁹ In the cases of torture or overkill the consciously inflicted harm rises above and beyond what was biologically necessary, and in the cases of ineffective hunting and starvation, the same is true, albeit as a consequence of contrary actions. If the maximum promotion of collaboration, safety, and happiness ought to be attempted by all organisms, and organisms need to be alive in order to

²⁷ Or reacted to with respect to the universal desires.

²⁸ The terms *positive* and *negative* here are not synonymous with morally good and bad. Instead they more or less align with the ideas of action and in-action, the latter of which being its own sort of action strangely enough.

²⁹ This phenomenon has been especially common in Buddhist cults, but just last year a Christian cult starved themselves to death.

engage in any kind of behavior before even ethical actions, then it follows that *unintelligent forces of nature* such as weather disasters and the food chain must be responded to by *intelligent agents of nature* in such a way as to minimize the harm caused to the consumed and maximize the benefit received by the consumer. Putting this conclusion into simpler terms, analogous to a tsunami, the food chain is an amoral force of nature, that if reacted to in direct accordance with biological necessity, does not stain the ethical status of an organism. This killing for the sole purpose of nutrient absorption must be carried out to the effect that unnecessary harm to the consumed is minimized, and necessary benefit to the consumer is maximized. This same Force of Nature Principle can be extended to the biological necessity of warfare in a global environment with limited resources, so long as one respects the conscious capacity of their opponents to suffer harm, minimizing it wherever possible by efficiently inflicting harm only when necessary for self-preservation. Thus, within this system, the ant who feeds its writhing enemies to its larvae is almost as evil as the human soldier who needlessly tortures their opponents, the only difference being that humans can conceptualize their suffering to a greater extent than the ant by virtue of their position on the Spectrum of Consciousness, so more harm is experienced by the tortured human than the tortured ant. To clarify, warfare is only an amoral force of nature insofar as the reality of limited resources is consciously reacted to with respect to the Principle of Biological Equality, and harm is sparingly inflicted to the extent that is directly necessary for self-preservation, so pre-emptive violence is not included in the purview of amoral action.

The astute reader has potentially already identified a looming grey area present in my theory thus far, that being the accidental or *unintentional* nature of some harmful actions, especially those perpetrated by children or persons of irregular consciousness such as hallucinating individuals. I pray that this exceptionally studious reader feels comfortable agreeing with me that an uninformed action is still intentionally set into motion, regardless of the agent's expected end

or lack thereof. By definition, actions signify conscious intention possessed by their actor, so it would be more accurate to describe this *unintentionality* as ignorance of causality, for it is the effect of the accidental action that is *unintended* not the performance of the action itself. Since actions, or inflicted shifts in perceiver-object relationships, are necessarily intentional, and exist somewhere along the effective tightrope between inflicted harm and benefit, logical consistency necessitates that even the most good-hearted accident has moral value so long as the actor possessed the capacity of properly understanding causality, but did not understand it for whatever conscious reason. Ignorance then, when natural and not a product of an intentional end *to be ignorant*, exemplified in the contrast between a learning child and an adult anti-intellectualist, is an amoral force of nature analogous to the food chain in the former case, and an immoral conscious choice in the latter, insofar as said ignorance produces harm.³⁰ Children, and arguably some developmentally delayed adults, inflict this amoral force of harmful ignorance upon their environment just as the tsunami razes the ocean-side village. The effects of their naturally accidental actions are harmful, but amoral cause they could not have acted in any other fashion, thus lacking the teleological intentionality required for my objective ethical framework. Humans of sufficient age³¹ that possess the causal and teleological understanding necessary for informed action can and should have their character judged in accordance with their harmful accidents, as they were capable of informing themselves to the extent that they would not have acted out of ignorance, and thus could have avoided causing harm. Following this declaration is the logical consequence that beings sufficiently capable of acquiring knowledge of causality have a naturally

³⁰In this sense, ignorance specifically refers to actions born of neutral or beneficial intention that effect harmful consequences, such as the curious child accidentally hurting their sibling in an attempt to learn, not intentionally harmful actions that were purposefully performed to be so, such as the hateful child hurting their sibling for the end of eliciting pain. The *Originative Ignorance* of Plato is a distinct definition, and is not what I am referring to here.

³¹ The exact or perhaps approximate age one becomes sufficiently conscious of causality is a topic for an entirely distinct dialectic escapade, and is insignificant to this current work since the Zachmanean moral calculator will be able to discern the normative ignorance of the agent(s) in ethical examination.

normative impetus to inform themselves, and I hold steadfastly to the relationship between mankind's linear epistemological and normative progressions as evidence to this claim. Just as it is biologically necessary for organisms to retain and seek out new information, they must then act in accordance to the conjunction of their knowledge of causality and universal harm and benefit, or be forever locked in an interfamilial Hobbesian State of War,³² isolated from society on either the micro or macro level due to a failure to recognize the evolutionary utility inherent to moral action.³³

Having dealt with the problem of harmful accidents caused by children, some of the developmentally delayed, and adults of sufficient capacity for attaining information, I must now analyze the moral fallibility of the hallucinator, an active agent typically incapable of accurately interpreting their relationship to their environment, and who experiences a perceptual disruption in regular cause and effect. It is crucial to first separate the psychedelic day-tripper from the congenital schizophrenic, and clear up the wide spectrum of intentionality existing between them. Any agent who is hallucinating as a result of conscious intention displayed in the near or distant past, as is the case with the tripper and the tripping-induced schizophrenic respectively,³⁴ falls within the same category of inactive ethical consideration as the anti-intellectual adult, due to their state of causal and teleological ignorance resulting from their previous conscious actions, a state which they are liable to accidentally affect benefit and harm within, and could have otherwise avoided entering into. The congenital schizophrenic who played no intentional role in the onset of

³² To be clear, I am not saying that morality is constructed and dependent on society as Hobbes did, rather the exact opposite, as Universal Desire Theory claims that societies, from family units to kingdoms realized in all organisms, are a product of preceding mind-independent normativity. Thus, the interfamilial Hobbesian State of War simply refers to the condition of animals who have been weeded out by natural selection due to a failure to socialize beneficially, or be moral.

³³ Or production of benefit and cessation of harm in accordance with collaboration, safety, and happiness.

³⁴ The consumption of entheogenic compounds carries with it the risk of inducing permanent psychosis, especially in organisms who are genetically or circumstantially pre-disposed to schizophrenia.

their hallucinatory condition, or whose schizophrenia-inducing action was performed whilst in a state of amoral ignorance,³⁵ cannot be included in inactive ethical consideration, since they are incapable of active ethical consideration. Can they still produce immense harm to themselves and others? Yes, and often, yet they cannot be morally blamed for operating within a hallucinatory world considerably detached from its generally universal perceptual similarity. I would bet significant digital representations of exchanged labor³⁶ that my beloved reader is holding onto a burning catechization in response to my apparently short-sighted inclusion of hallucinations in this paper, that is at least qualitatively identical to what follows. Aren't all subjective interpretations of objective reality some kind of hallucination? What is an individual worldview, or representational model, if not an inferential construction of incomplete and often inaccurate contiguous strings of sensory data? I shall now quiet this restless quandarizing by pointing back to the beginning of this paper, where my account of objective subjectivity was established as the universal similarity within the perception of basic ontological facts necessarily present in all acting beings. Unanimous agreement is not required for objectivity to be realized, and Universal Desire Theory holds fast in the absolute calculation of an organism's normative character so long as they possess the capacity for active ethical consideration, existing in all organisms except for those acting upon amoral ignorance, i.e. children, some developmentally delayed adults, and the congenitally schizophrenic.

Having already dealt weathered a torrential downpour of theoretical criticism, I will now go to battle with what is still the most profound aspersion of falsity levied against the biological basis of my Universal Desire Theory, which is the supposedly inseparable definitional division between the hard and soft sciences, or what is categorically descriptive and normative, as argued

³⁵ This scenario regarding intentional childhood induction of schizophrenia would technically negate its congenital quality, but since they acted whilst in a state prior to the birth of their conscious comprehension of causality, one could severely stretch the definition of congenital here. If the reader is not comfortable with this metaphorical stretch, then they are welcome to fabricate a more suitable definition for this second class of schizophrenic.

³⁶ Or 21st Century money.

for by Donald S. Klinefelter in his article *E. O. Wilson and the Limits of Ethical Naturalism*. Klinefelter, aided by the words of pragmatist scientist Richard Rorty, defines hard science as any observational study focused on objects and events that exist independently of cognition, such as astronomy, physics, and most potentially disastrously for me, biology. Soft science focuses on the analytical study of phenomena³⁷ that exist dependent on cognition, mainly the kind of work contemporarily practiced under the name philosophy. Hard science aims to describe what *is*, soft science attempts to pin down what we *ought* to do with the knowledge of what *is*, thus, hard science can be called descriptive, and soft science normative. An ought claim such as “Shmebulok ought to maintain control of their body” can be negated or failed, as when Shmebulok drunkenly rams his body into innocent passerby. It is not clear that an *is* claim can be failed in this same way, and this is partly because of the necessary involvement of choice within *ought* claims. Two questions that illustrate this point are as follows: can one fail to evolve, or to circulate blood throughout their cardiovascular system? Surely both of these processes stop when one dies, but while active as an actionable actor one cannot choose to stop their heart beat, or stop possessing the genetic structure and other necessary properties relevant to their taxonomical identification as a Homo Sapien. Because one’s biology cannot be delineated from in the same way one can choose to act contrary to a universal standard of *ought* claims, my theoretical opponents can argue that a biological basis for an objective normative system is impossible, since the very definition of *ought* necessitates an ulterior route of action, or an *ought not*, if you will. Since universal desire theory claims that there *is* a natural law that constitutes the objective basis for each organism’s subjective formulation of the good, this definitional divide is insignificant, as the universal biological desires shared between all organisms do not cease to exist when an agent acts as they *ought not*, for as I have

³⁷ I say *phenomena* instead of *object* here since it is not apparently clear that thoughts and concepts do not take up physical space in the world, but this definitional division assumes that they do not.

established throughout this paper, even actions that deprive the actor or its surroundings of collaboration, safety, and happiness are nevertheless motivated by these ends, just in an unconscious manner. The contention posed by Klinefelter and Rorty is not only a matter of definition however, but of intellectual practicality, as they do not see the utility in conflating the two areas of philosophical investigation. They claim that the experimental sciences exist to help us “when we know what we want but don't know how to get it,” while the humanities and arts exist to help us “when we are not sure what we should want.” I don't see any reason why this should necessarily be the case aside from personal semantic preference, as these questions are not as distinct as Klinefelter and Rorty paint them to be. Science and philosophy have been intrinsically intertwined since the inception of human thought, and remain this way today despite the intense specialization that post-industrial economies have made possible. As the most powerful organism capable of conscious action, what *is* has always been critically informed by what we think *ought* to be, evidenced by the infinite sea of invention and technological innovation that has thrust this very computer I am typing on across the sands of existence, transitioning the computer from *ought* to *is* by the very fact that humans thought it should exist. Likewise, what we've determined *ought* to be has always been reciprocally influenced by what *is*, as all invention and innovation has been dreamt up to either solve a problem that *is* and thus *ought not* be, or to increase the quality of the physical reality humans inhabit, thus improving what *is*. To separate *is* and *ought* is to tear an un-sewable rift in the very biology my theoretical opponents aim to defend, for evolution requires subjective ends just as much as it does genes to progressively adapt.

Granting that I have succeeded in establishing that the harmful accident perpetuated by an agent who theoretically could have acted to promote the opposite effect is necessarily immoral within the confines of Universal Desire Theory, moral action appears to require a prophetic skill equivalent to that of Nostradamus or the writers of the Simpsons. How can one act morally within

this system if we are biologically prone to mistakes and inadequate predictions of future causal events? The answer to this rests in the simultaneously calming and nerve-frying fact that organismal nature is imperfect, thus it is untenable for one to hold moral perfection as a necessary pre-requisite to contentment. For every being that successfully contributes to its special gene pool through a positive aggregate accordance with Universal Desire, there is an infinitude of their kin that meets the bloody jaws of the opposite accumulation of decisions. Every ethical framework, religious or not, describes this inability to be completely effective candidates for natural selection through symbols and equations respectively, typically deeming the phenomenon to be specifically *human nature*, when I hope to have shown that in actuality it is the much wider organismal nature that we are so privileged to conceptualize through essentialist ideals and realist descriptions. Just as our individual constructions of reality are perceptually pooled together to qualify objectivity, normativity exists as a framework that we necessarily act within, but can never perfectly align ourselves with. It is nature, and we will never completely understand it, yet our ontological guesses are solid enough to predicate the very practice we are both engaged in as I type this and you read it, and that is pretty damn beautiful.

To re-capitulate the over seven thousand words that have hopefully downloaded Universal Desire Theory into your wetware³⁸ without any coding-related hiccups, normativity exists in the natural world as an understanding of relational causality necessarily present in all acting organisms, predicated on their universal desires for collaboration, safety, and happiness, and equally universal avoidance of the opposing experiences, to the effect that all perceiving beings down to the cell inherently interpret and respond to normativity, the universally observable consequences of intentional action in specific relation to this understanding. Because all subjective

³⁸ "Mind" expressed through functionalist terminology.

models of interpretation³⁹ are universally capable of perceiving this normativity, with the exception of children, some developmentally delayed adults, and congenital schizophrenics, this subjectivity becomes objective by any meaningful definition of the word. To follow Universal Desire Theory is to act with respect for all conscious life forms, promoting benefit and prohibiting harm in all avenues of one's interactions where harm is not biologically required by an amoral Force of Nature, and where it is, one must kill their prey or conspecific enemy in alignment with the Principle of Biological Equality.

And there it is! Don't jump! Truth, wait- I think I caught it, I- No!

Too slippery to grab ahold of for more than a second, the truth sprints across the bridge I worked so hard to build, remaining just outside of my grasp despite my relentless chase, and although I couldn't catch it, the least I could do was save it from the doom of eternal semantic turf wars between team objective and team subjective. I worked to the maximum of my frail capacity to catch it, and only you, the reader, have the ability to watch the instant replay and see if I actually made any physical contact during my lunge. At a minimum, I significantly improved my own understanding of the arguments I tend to sling around in ethical dialectic, and at a maximum, I gave you some delicious words to chew on. Just make sure to responsibly discard of the wrapper once you're finished, as littering contributes to the deprivation of an infinitude of beings' long-term prospects of attaining collaboration, safety, and happiness, and you now fully comprehend the naturally unethical consequences of this causal infliction of harm.

With Peace,

-Asher

³⁹ Or worldviews.

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