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Pleasure is Goodness; Morality is Universal

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Abstract
This paper presents the Universality Argument that pleasure is goodness. It proceeds from a moral sense theory that analyzes moral concepts as concerned with what all should hope for, feel guilty about, and admire. This requires rejecting the view that moral judgment concerns empirically inaccessible norms governing action. The first premise defines goodness as what should please all. The second premise reduces *should* to perceptual accuracy. The third premise invokes a standard of universal accuracy: qualitative identity. Since the pleasure of all is accurate solely about pleasure, pleasure is goodness, or universal moral value.

Keywords Pleasure · Reasons · Empiricism · Hedonism · Universality · Ethics

1 Practical Anti-empiricism, 1785–2023

Most ethicists today ascribe fundamental ethical significance to norms governing practical agency, which aren't empirically accessible. Roger Crisp (2006) begins *Reasons and the Good* by expressing the orthodox view that "a – perhaps *the* – fundamental question in philosophical normative ethics concerns what each of us has reason to do" (1). Three decades of landmark books stand as monuments to this consensus, spanning the normative ethical landscape: Jonathan Dancy's (1993) *Moral Reasons*, Christine Korsgaard's (1996) *Sources of Normativity*, T.M. Scanlon's (1998) *What We Owe To Each Other*, Michael Huemer's (2005) *Ethical Intuitionism*, Frances Kamm's (2007) *Intricate Ethics*, John Skorupski's (2010) *The Domain of Reasons*, David Enoch's (2011) *Taking Morality Seriously*, Derek Parfit's (2011) *On What Matters*, and Bart Streumer's (2017) *Unbelievable Errors*.

Proceeding from reasons to the good, Crisp defends ethical hedonism. He argues that pleasure constitutes well-being, and that all reasons for action are for promoting it. After presenting powerful arguments in favor of entering the Experience Machine, he offers dis-

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tributive principles to promote aggregate pleasure while avoiding counterintuitive consequences of utilitarianism. Crisp's well-crafted and humane theory recalls hedonism's past popularity.

A section titled "Hedonism's Decline" notes that "In the twentieth century, however, hedonism became significantly less popular" (99). Crisp asks why. The answer lies in a metaethical commitment he shares with the other nine authors. *Practical anti-empiricism* assigns fundamental ethical significance to empirically inaccessible norms governing action, preventing pleasure's ethical significance from being understood.

Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785/2012) defines "morals" as the domain in which practical anti-empiricism is true. Kant begins by defining "ethics" (*ETHIK*) as "laws of freedom" concerning agents with free will, contrasted with "laws of nature" applying to unfree things (4:387). He then defines "morals" (*Sitten*) as the non-empirical part of ethics, contrasted with "practical anthropology" which includes anything even partly empirical (4:388). "Morals" therefore concerns empirically inaccessible laws governing practical agency.

Kant argues that the universality of morality requires practical anti-empiricism:

> by what right could we bring into unlimited respect, as a universal precept for every rational nature, what is perhaps valid only under the contingent conditions of humanity? And how should laws of the determination of *our will* be taken as laws of the determination of the will of rational beings as such, and for ours only as rational beings, if they were merely empirical and did not have their origin completely *a priori* in pure but practical reason? (4:408)

All ten of our landmark books share Kant's foundational assumptions, defining moral normativity as empirically inaccessible and fundamentally practical. This first section describes how practical anti-empiricism shapes contemporary ethical debate. The second section explains how it undervalues pleasure and other things whose evaluative significance is empirically accessible and not explained by reasons for action.

The last three sections proceed from moral sense theory instead of practical anti-empiricism, and present the *Universality Argument* that pleasure's moral value is universal. The argument first analyzes goodness as what all should hope for. Moral feelings like hope represent reality as sensations do, so they should be accurate rather than inaccurate. A naturalistic standard of universal perceptual accuracy applies to feelings like hope – qualitative identity between the pleasure they contain and the reality they represent. All metaphysically possible moral perceivers should therefore hope for more pleasure in the world. This makes pleasure goodness, or universal moral value.

Practical anti-empiricism is compatible with a range of ontological conceptions of reasons for action. *Platonism* treats reasons as ontologically substantial abstract objects, which are empirically inaccessible and causally isolated from physical things. This distinguishes abstract objects from physical things and the nonphysical qualia of contemporary dualism, both of which causally interact with physical things and are empirically accessible. Platonic reasons join mathematical and modal facts in Frege's "third realm" beyond body and mind, called "Plato's Heaven" in the colloquialisms of colloquia.[1] *Deflationism* treats reasons as

[1] Bengson (2015).

less ontologically substantial. Noncognitivism about reasons is a strong form of deflationism. The coherence of moderate positions like Parfit's is debated.[2]

Platonism, deflationism, and all ontological views in between share the epistemological consequence that intuition, not experience, discovers reasons for action. Practical anti-empiricists could still allow experience to discover non-practical forms of ethical significance, but most instead aim to cover all normativity with a single theory. Skorupski extends anti-empiricism to reasons for feeling, making even this form of ethical significance empirically inaccessible. Normative relations like fittingness are often given the same range of ontological treatments, with the same consequence that normativity can't be discovered in experience.[3]

Experience includes consciousness and mental states embedded in it that explain and justify belief, providing empirical knowledge. These include sensory perception, the emotional phenomenology constituting feelings, and our introspective awareness of sensory and emotional experience. Experience extends beyond individual bodily limitations with aid from scientific instruments and communication from others.

Pleasure is experience with positive hedonic tone, characterized by Crisp as a "certain common quality – feeling good" (109). The hedonic tone of experience ranges from intense pleasure to intense displeasure.[4] Whether in bodily sensation or emotional experience, all pleasure feels good and all displeasure feels bad. (I'll often mention only pleasure for brevity.) Other theories treat pleasure as an attitude rather than an experience.[5] They typically invoke this attitude to explain hedonic tone.[6] By accepting that hedonic tone exists, they accept the existence of what Crisp calls "pleasure", and can accept the arguments that follow despite terminological differences.

Humean theories understand reasons as considerations promoting desire-satisfaction. They allow empirical discovery of reasons in discovering how to attain what's desired.[7] Seeing Michelangelo eat pizza is empirical evidence of his desire to eat pizza, which explains his reasons to eat it. Michelangelo's hedonic and attentional phenomenology of eating pizza gives him empirical access to his reasons. While these Humean reasons are empirically accessible, they aren't universal. Creatures who desire other foods have reason to eat other things. Non-universal reasons grounded in desire satisfy some ethicists.[8] But most seek universal moral truth.

Reasons and the Good recapitulates Kant's view that only practical anti-empiricism allows universality: "After some discussion of issues concerning universality I defend the analogy between ethical principles and mathematics which has been standard in the rational intuitionist tradition" (13). Crisp draws the standard anti-empiricist conclusion: "Normative intuition, then, is a capacity that enables rational beings to understand and to believe certain *a priori*, necessary, and universal principles asserting normative reasons for action" (77).

[2] Veluwenkamp (2017), Mintz-Woo (2018).

[3] Chappell (2012).

[4] Kagan (1998), Smuts (2011), Bramble (2013).

[5] Ventham (forthcoming).

[6] Feldman (2004), Schroeder (2004), Heathwood (2007).

[7] Sobel (2001), Schroeder (2007).

[8] Finlay (2014), Ridge (2014), Case & Lutz (forthcoming).

The object of the game in many contemporary normative ethical debates is to explain the reasons for action revealed by intuition. Consequentialists invoke the goodness of events. Deontologists invoke the rightness of actions. Virtue ethicists invoke virtuous character traits. Hedonists invoke pleasure. Particularists invoke many things. The theory that best explains the reasons wins.

In contemporary moral debates, Occam's Razor is rarely used against theories invoking excessive principles. Huemer argues that using Occam's Razor in Plato's Heaven might damage important things like mathematics and modality. Deflationism gives it nothing to cut. Excessive use of Occam's Razor might destroy all the reasons, giving Streumer's error theory a victory that even that he sees no reason to pursue.

Intuition suggests a distribution of reasons too complex and unpatterned for monistic theories like hedonism to explain. Kamm's intricate ethics and Dancy's particularism can add complexity until all reasons are explained. Occam's Razor cuts against overcomplicated theories, but where it's prohibited, the simplicity of hedonism is no advantage. For all of Crisp's skill at this strange game, how could the odds ever be in his favor?

Philippa Foot (1972) recognized that the winning move is not to play. She saw "that though moral norms *apply* to everyone, they must do so in some other way than by providing them with reasons" (7), as Mark Schroeder (2007) writes. Footsteps lead back from her position, but we won't follow them.[9] Where we're going, we don't need reasons for action.

2 Evaluative Significance not Recognized by Practical Anti-empiricism

Food, music, natural beauty, survival, and pleasure have empirically accessible evaluative significance that isn't fundamentally explained by reasons for action. Practical anti-empiricism doesn't properly recognize such value. It therefore provides a poor account of aesthetic value, and undervalues survival and pleasure, disadvantaging consequentialism and hedonism.

Experience, not intuition about reasons, discovers the deliciousness of food and the beauty of music. Deliciousness doesn't consist in the cook's reasons for cooking the food, and musical beauty doesn't consist in the musician's reasons for making the music. Our fundamental acquaintance with deliciousness and musical beauty occurs in experiences of eating and listening, not deliberation or Korsgaardian rational endorsement. Deliciousness and musical beauty can provide reasons for action when we cook or sing for others, just as they provide reasons for belief that some foods or songs are better than others. But value detected in experience explains these reasons for action and belief. If experience presents foods or songs as bad, there's less reason to cook or sing them.

Natural beauty is empirically observable, and doesn't originate in agency. In 2010, Paul Vasquez was overcome with delight at the beauty of a double rainbow in Yosemite National Park. The YouTube video of his joy been viewed almost fifty million times.[10] Non-hedonists might regard the ethical significance he experienced as objective natural beauty; hedonists regard it as pleasure. Either way, practical anti-empiricism forbids experience from discovering it. Scanlon argues that goodness isn't "something that inheres in states of affairs"

[9] Foot (2001).

[10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQSNhk5ICTI&ab_channel=Yosemitebear62.

(101). But if the goodness of seeing a double rainbow doesn't inhere in the state of affairs where one sees it, how did Vasquez discover it?

Much like the aesthetic value of food, music, and nature, the moral value of survival is discovered in experience, and doesn't consist in norms governing action. Practical anti-empiricism underestimates the value of survival by considering it from the perspective of the deliberating agent, rather than the perspective of those who survive. This favors deontology over consequentialism. Moral dilemmas are usually posed from the agent's perspective, making reasons for action loom largest. A standard problem concerns whether to push one person in front of a trolley to save the five people whom the trolley would otherwise run over. When asked whether to push or whether pushing is permissible, 90% think it's wrong to push.

Considering trolley problems from behind the veil of ignorance includes the experience of all affected, favoring consequentialism over deontology. Suppose you aren't the Agent. You might be Person #1, #2, #3, #4, or #5 on the tracks, or the Bystander. But you don't know which one you are. The Agent's intention to push or not push the Bystander will now be revealed. Later, you'll discover which of the six you are. Behind the veil of ignorance about your identity, should you hope the Agent decided to push, or not push?

You should hope the Agent decided to push. Then you probably survive (1/6 chance of dying = 17%). Not pushing means you probably die (5/6 chance of dying = 83%). The same is true of everyone else, so selfishness and altruism alike favor pushing.

What matters most in trolley problems is how many people will die. Yet they're typically presented from the perspective of the sole person guaranteed to survive – the Agent. The Bystander also gets some special consideration, in honor of proximity to the Agent. From the Agent's perspective, Person #4's life matters, but isn't that weighty a reason for action, so it's wrong to push.

For Person #4, the properties of the Agent's action that ethicists focus on aren't that significant. If the Agent doesn't push the Bystander, Person #4 will die. The same is true of Persons #1, #2, #3, and #5. Behind the veil of ignorance, all should hope the Agent pushes the Bystander. Asking how the Agent should act favors deontology; asking what all should hope for behind the veil of ignorance favors consequentialism.

Sharon Hewitt Rawlette (2016) argues that experiencing pleasure can cause acquisition of the concept of goodness, and belief that pleasure is good:

> experiencing felt goodness provides us with the basic qualitative content of our concept of intrinsic moral goodness. Felt goodness *is* moral goodness of the most basic kind; it is the basic objective value that gives meaning to moral discussion and action. And this conceptual relation between phenomenal goodness and moral goodness is the key to a robust moral realism, to a realism that locates goodness within the empirical realm. (74)

Moral value is pleasure itself: "intrinsic goodness and badness are *phenomenal qualities of experience*" (72), and "*intrinsic goodness and badness just are felt qualities*" (73).

Rawlette's empiricism about moral concept-acquisition and belief-formation provides metaethical foundations suited to ethical hedonism. Pleasure's goodness can be understood by having pleasure and introspectively discovering what it's like. Empiricist accounts

of moral concept-acquisition and belief-formation go naturally together, as empirically acquired concepts typically apply to empirically observed things.

Moral sense theorist Francis Hutcheson (1726/2004) similarly regards moral concepts as acquired through experiences of pleasure.[11] Hutcheson writes, "The Pleasure in our sensible Perceptions of any kind, gives us our first Idea of natural Good, or Happiness; and then all Objects which are apt to excite this Pleasure are call'd immediately Good" (86). Just as children seeing yellow things for the first time can acquire concepts of yellow things and yellow-experiences, children having pleasure for the first time can acquire the concept of goodness, and apply it both to pleasure and to what pleases them.

Metaethical views so friendly to hedonism are forbidden by practical anti-empiricism. Crisp must deny that introspection of pleasure's goodness reveals its ethical significance, holding that "Value has no direct, analytic, or conceptual link with normativity," (62) which consists in reasons for action. He must defend the ethical significance of pleasure's goodness not with introspection, but with the same process of intuition used to discover mathematical axioms and higher-order infinities. He takes intuition to justify the "'bedrock principle' that any individual has an ultimate normative reason to advance their own well-being" (61).

Our ten landmark books stand upon different bedrock principles, but practical anti-empiricism is their common ground. Henry Sidgwick led many utilitarians to Kant's position, and now the definitions of the *Groundwork* are their blueprint for ethical significance and its epistemology.[12] *On What Matters* is built upon these premises, and in it Parfit hails Sidgwick and Kant as his "two masters" (xxxiii). Kant is indeed the master architect of contemporary ethics; from his practical anti-empiricism rises a Kingdom of Ends.

Hedonists who abandon practical anti-empiricism and return to moral sense theory will find a sound deductive argument establishing pleasure as universal moral value. This Universality Argument defines goodness as what should please all metaphysically possible moral perceivers, reduces *should* to universal perceptual accuracy, and invokes qualitative identity as a universal standard of accuracy:

1. *hedonic analysis*: x is good ↔ x should please all.
2. *accuracy naturalism*: x should please Y ↔ x makes pleasure accurate for Y.
3. *qualitative identity*: x makes pleasure accurate for all ↔ x is pleasure.

∴ *hedonism*: x is good ↔ x is pleasure.

The conclusion entails ethical hedonism and naturalistic moral realism.[13] Each remaining section defends a premise.

The first premise defines goodness as what should please all metaphysically possible moral perceivers (abbreviated as "all"). All should have pleasant moral feelings like hope and delight for good events, and unpleasant moral feelings like horror and sorrow about bad events. The argument proceeds by giving a naturalistic account of this universal *should*.

The second premise is a naturalistic reduction of *should* to perceptual accuracy. Pleasant moral feelings are experiences that represent reality, like sensations. They should be accu-

[11] Chuang (2015).

[12] Woodard (2019).

[13] Colebrook (2018), Laskowski (2020).

rate just like sensations should. Together, these two premises entail that goodness makes hope accurate for all.

The third premise treats qualitative identity, or sameness between things, as accuracy. Just as accurate pictures look like what's depicted, and empathy is accurate if the empathizer feels like the other person, hope is accurate about things that are pleasant like hope. This is the only naturalistic way to make the pleasure of all accurate about something unified. That thing is pleasure itself, which all should hope for, making it goodness, or universal moral value.

3 Hedonic Analysis: x is Good ↔ x Should Please All

Moral sense theory begins with a hedonic analysis of moral concepts:[14]

Concept	Hedonic analysis	Examples of pleasant / unpleasant feelings
GOOD	events that should please all	hope (if uncertain), delight
RIGHT	actions that should please all	pride
VIRTUOUS	traits that should please all	admiration
BAD	events that should displease all	horror, sadness
WRONG	actions that should displease all	guilt (for oneself), anger (for others)
EVIL / VICE	traits that should displease all	hatred (for evil), contempt (for vice)
UNJUST	systems that should displease all	outrage

"All" refers to all metaphysically possible beings who can be pleased or displeased, and judge these feelings to be about objective features of reality. Of course, no unified set of things pleases this vast range of real and fictional moral perceivers, whose feelings differ greatly. But universal moral value isn't what does please all, it's what should please all. Many are pleased by things that shouldn't please them, or not pleased by things that should please them. Subsequent premises will clarify this *should*.

Moral value is universal, unlike many other types of value. Beauty is proverbially in the eye of the beholder. Deliciousness, beauty, and fashionability need only please a narrower range of perceivers – perhaps one's culture or oneself. Things can have these forms of aesthetic value for individuals or cultures whether or not they should please all. Morality, however, requires universality.

Pleasure and displeasure are the most basic moral feelings, when they're taken to represent something objective about events, actions, character traits, or social systems. More complex moral feelings have additional phenomenal character or representational content. Moral feelings' pleasantness or unpleasantness explains whether judgments that all should have them are positive or negative. All should hope for good events, take pride in right action, and admire virtue – pleasant feelings about positive things. All should be horrified by horrible events, feel guilt at wrong action, hate evil, and be outraged by injustice – unpleasant feelings about negative things. All should feel good about good things and bad about bad things.

Moral concepts exclude each other when moral feelings do. Calling something "good and bad" or "right and wrong" can be incoherent, as hedonic tone can't rise and fall simultaneously. Psychopaths make such moral claims, as they are deficient in moral feeling and therefore can't acquire the associated concepts from their experience. Robert Hare (1999)

[14] Jackson (1998).

recalls a psychopath describing his "mother, the most beautiful person in the world. She was strong, worked hard to take care of four kids. A beautiful person. I started stealing her jewelry when I was in the fifth grade. You know, I never really knew the bitch – we went our separate ways" (40). Following expressions of admiration so abruptly with this misogynistic expression of contempt is like calling something yellowish-violet. Those who understand the relevant experiences don't say such things.

Coherent clarifications of expressions like "good and bad" might distinguish the objects of pleasure and displeasure, or subtract the displeasure from the pleasure to calculate net hedonic tone. Both clarifications help us understand a universalized and therefore moralized form of schadenfreude addressed by the analysis. While someone else's suffering is bad, it might also constitute a sort of cosmic justice – perhaps as making everything more just by punishing misdeeds or removing unfair advantages. Pleasure about justice may then exceed displeasure about misfortune, making moral schadenfreude pleasant overall.

Relations between moral feelings explain relations between moral concepts. All should admire those disposed to do what all should hope for, so character traits aimed at the good are virtues.[15] All should feel proud of bringing about events that all should hope for. But if something about their actions in doing so should greatly anger all, perhaps they should feel guilt rather than pride. These relations between feelings suggest that good consequences can justify action, but also allow the conceptual possibility of actions with an irreducible and overriding wrongness that good consequences are insufficient to justify. Questions about the rightness or wrongness of action reduce to "the question of how we should feel about certain sorts of actions", which Brian McElwee (2010) rightly calls a "a central moral question" (319–320). We should have unpleasant feelings like anger and guilt about wrong action; we should have pleasant feelings like pride about right action. This is how moral sense theory judges actions using norms for feeling.

Since desire systematically generates pleasant feelings about its object and explains reasons for action, motivation and reasons for action are systematically correlated with moral feelings. Our moral feelings are typically caused by the same desires that motivate acting accordingly and that explain reasons to do so. The correlations between moral feelings and effects of desire help moral sense theorists characterize the practical significance of moral judgments. Kind people desire that others not suffer. This causes them to feel bad about others' suffering, motivates them to prevent suffering, and gives them desire-based reasons to prevent suffering.

Should is a generic normative term. It may be further characterizable in terms of reasons for feeling, fittingness, or value of some kind. The naturalistic path to hedonism goes through empirically driven reductions of these normative properties. Any conception of fundamental normativity that supports these reductions is suitable.

As Allan Gibbard (1990) discusses, noncognitivism, constructivism, error theory, non-naturalism, and naturalistic realism apply different interpretations of *should* to mental states. The hedonic analysis treats this mental state as pleasure, while practical anti-empiricism might treat it as action, motivation, desire, or intention. Noncognitivists understand *should* to express mental states that aren't beliefs. Constructivists understand *should* to describe mental states as held by some possible beings, perhaps oneself or one's society. Error theorists understand *should* to falsely describe relations to mental states. Non-naturalists understand *should* to describe objective non-natural relations to mental states. Naturalistic

[15] Driver (2009).

realists understand *should* to describe objective natural relations to mental states. With five metaethical analyses of *should* and two mental states it might apply to, there are ten options. Which are coherent conceptual possibilities?

The three clearly coherent options combine moral sense theory with error theory, non-naturalism, or naturalistic realism. Moral sense theorists can remain neutral about the coherence of practical anti-empiricism. Requiring objectivity and universality rules out noncognitivism and constructivism. Both reject objectivity; constructivism also rejects universality. Error theory, non-naturalism, and naturalistic realism agree that moral facts would be objective truths about what should please all. They disagree about whether such facts are within natural reality, outside it like Platonic reasons, or nonexistent.

The coherence of non-naturalism helps the hedonic analysis accommodate G.E Moore's (1903/1962) point that analyses of moral concepts don't directly entail substantive moral truths. Analyses of "good" should leave substantive moral questions open, so that false claims about goodness are substantively mistaken rather than incoherent. "Famine is good" is substantively mistaken like "Gandhi lived in Finland". Neither is incoherent like "Gandhi wasn't related to his mother," where understanding "mother" and "related" reveals the incoherence. Native speakers intuitively distinguish conceptual and synthetic falsehoods.[16] Moore warns analytic naturalists that "nobody can foist upon us such an axiom as that 'Pleasure is the only good' or that 'The good is the desired' on the pretense that this is 'the very meaning of the word'" (7). The hedonic analysis doesn't analytically entail pleasure's goodness or the falsity of any standard moral theory. It interprets "Famine is good despite causing overall displeasure" as the coherent falsehood that "all metaphysically possible moral perceivers should be pleased by famine despite its causing overall displeasure." Rawlette proceeds differently, disagreeing with Moore and treating the identity between pleasure and goodness as analytic.

By treating Moore's own non-naturalism as coherent but false, naturalists can share his explanation of how false normative ethical theories are coherent. Moore thinks it's conceptually possible for non-natural moral properties to supervene on many different bases, with each supervenience arrangement being a different normative ethical theory's moral metaphysics. Accepting that all these supervenience arrangements are conceptually possible lets him explain why so many false moral theories are coherent. Goodness might supervene on famine in this merely conceptual sense of "might" (though it really doesn't). By treating Moore's non-naturalist metaphysics as coherent (but false), naturalistic realists accept the coherence of all the moral theories it treats as coherent. These false theories posit non-natural moral properties, arranged in coherent ways that don't correspond to reality. Naturalists therefore avoid trouble with Moore's Open Question Argument by metaphysically modeling the false moral theories like Moore does.

Since naturalism, non-naturalism, and error theory are all conceptually coherent, conceptual analysis doesn't reveal the nature or existence of *should*.[17] So here conceptual analysis ends, and empirical investigation into the nature of *should* begins.[18] If the simplest explanation of our empirical evidence gives *should* a particular nature, accepting the explanation and attributing that nature to *should* achieves the supreme goal of all theory. As Albert Ein-

[16] Grice and Strawson (1956).

[17] Boyd (1988), Sayre-McCord (1988).

[18] Railton (1989).

stein (1934) writes, "the supreme goal of all theory is to make the irreducible basic elements as simple and as few as possible without having to surrender the adequate representation of a single datum of experience" (165).

4 Accuracy Naturalism: x Should Please Y ↔ x Makes Pleasure Accurate for Y

Experiences that represent reality and correspond with it are accurate, as they should be. Moral feelings are experiences that represent reality, just as sensations are. Accuracy naturalism therefore identifies *should* with a norm of perceptual accuracy for moral feelings. Together with the hedonic analysis, this entails that goodness makes pleasure accurate for all.

Sensations and feelings are experiences, having a robust immediate phenomenology and the power to cause beliefs sharing their representational content. Both sensations and feelings represent reality accurately if reality corresponds with their content, and inaccurately if it doesn't. "Should" can express a concept of perceptual accuracy. If you look at a triangle and have a visual impression of a trapezoid, you aren't seeing as you should. If you're delighted by famine, you aren't feeling as you should. According to accuracy naturalism, this is because delight doesn't correspond with famine, much as triangle-experience doesn't correspond with trapezoids.

Perceptual states and pictures should be accurate, just as beliefs and declarative sentences should be true. Both accuracy and truth consist in correspondence with reality. That the moon is full can be accurately seen and depicted, just as it can be truly believed and described. Vision, depiction, belief, and description are all representations, capable of corresponding with reality or failing to do so. Susanna Siegel (2010) calls what perceptual states represent their "accuracy conditions", much like the truth-conditions of belief (30).

Siegel notes that "accuracy comes in degrees" (32). While the true-false binary suits sentences and beliefs, the accurate-inaccurate continuum suits perception and depiction, for which degrees of correspondence vary continuously. Accuracy ranges continuously from total inaccuracy to perfect accuracy. Imperfect representations like low-resolution pictures and nearsighted vision are still accurate enough for many purposes. Such accuracy without perfection is common. When context requires simply calling representations accurate or inaccurate, contextually determined thresholds can split the continuum into binary distinctions.[19]

Because accuracy is a non-normative relation of perceptual correspondence with reality, accuracy naturalism is a synthetic naturalistic reduction of *should*. It explains the normative significance of saying that people should feel otherwise if they hope for famine, or feel guilt about harmless pleasures. Because their feelings are inaccurate about the moral reality of famine, or of harmless pleasures, these people should feel otherwise. This synthetic reduction explains the normative significance of *should*, in terms of correspondence with moral reality.

Just as naturalistic realists can identify the *should* of moral feeling with accuracy, they might identify practical value with what's desired, aesthetic value with subjective beauty, epistemic value with correspondence, and rationality with expected increase in valuable

[19] Sinhababu (2018).

things.[20] These reductions give moral value the goodness of pleasure, practical value the appeal of what's desired, aesthetic value the enchantment of subjective beauty, epistemic value the explanatory power of correspondence, and rationality the value of expected increase in valuable things. Reducing *should* to accuracy similarly gives it the significance of correspondence between perceptual representation and moral reality.

Mental representation, or content, explains how intelligent animals act, think, and feel. While language-use provides evidence for precise mental content attributions, David Hume (1739/1978) recognizes that content explains nonlinguistic animal behavior too: "A dog, that has hid a bone, often forgets the place; but when brought to it, his thought passes easily to what he formerly concealed, by means of the contiguity, which produces a relation among his ideas" (327). The dog's recollection that the bone is there explains his outward behavior and his shift in attentional focus. Mental states explain behavior and the accompanying experiences in many mammals, including humans.

Psychological evidence that moral judgments have perceptual content is often misinterpreted to suggest that they have practical content. Consider Michael Smith's (1994) defense of the internalist view that "If an agent judges that it is right for her to phi in circumstances C, then either she is motivated to phi in C or she is practically irrational" (61). David Brink (1986) offers the counterexample of amoralists who aren't motivated because they don't desire to do what's right. Smith replies that these amoralists don't understand the concept of moral rightness, analogizing them to "someone, blind from birth, who has a reliable method of using colour terms. We might imagine that she has been hooked up to a machine from birth that allows her to feel, through her skin, when an object has the appropriate surface reflectance properties" (68–69). Smith's internalist principle concerns practical output, but his color example concerns perceptual input. Brink could reply that the example only suggests perceptual content, not practical content, for moral judgment.

Moral concepts don't give moral beliefs motivational effects that would justify attributing practical content to them. Even in rational agents who understand moral concepts, strongly homophobic moral beliefs don't generate the motivation or phenomenology characteristic of heterosexual orientation.[21] The failure of deeply held moral belief to constitute or change sexual orientation reveals its motivational inefficacy independent of desire. Moral beliefs, like nonmoral beliefs, don't motivate action or rationally generate desire by themselves, and must interact with desire to motivate action. As Timothy Schroeder's (2004) neuroscientific investigations suggest, "there is no special dignity in the structure of moral motivation, only in its content" (161).

Since moral concepts don't confer any special motivational powers on belief, moral concepts shouldn't in general be analyzed in relation to action. Concepts of rightness and wrongness apply to action, but this doesn't generalize to other moral concepts or make their normativity fundamentally practical. Just as inferences from belief alone never have the conclusion that the believer explodes, they never have the conclusion that the believer acts. Perhaps we can imagine creatures whose beliefs generates such explosive or practical inferences. But we are not such creatures. Supposed real-world examples of belief alone moti-

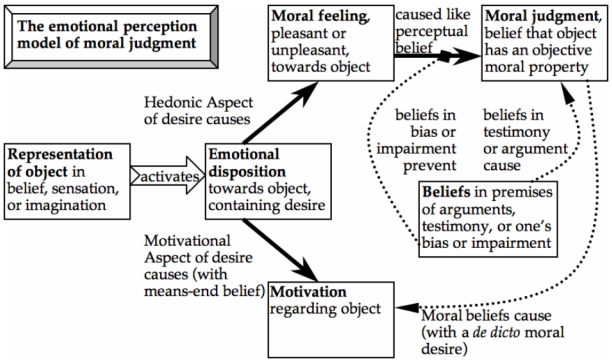
[20] Skipper (forthcoming).

[21] Díaz-León (2017), Whitlow & Laskowski (forthcoming).

vating action or generating new desire inevitably turn out to require a pre-existing desire. Stimuli that activate the desire's attentional and hedonic aspects reveal its presence.[22]

While moral beliefs lack motivational output, they're generated by input from experience.[23] The flow of experience constantly generates perceptual belief. Pleasure and displeasure generate moral belief, just as sensation generates belief about nearby objects. When experimental subjects read vignettes and rate the wrongness of the characters' actions on a scale, being exposed to unpleasant smells causes them to judge actions more wrong.[24] Similarly negative moral judgments can be induced by making some questionnaires unpleasantly hard to read.[25] Vignettes with gratuitous disgusting features can cause experimental subjects to make judgments of wrongness that they can't explain.[26] As these examples show, inducing additional displeasure causes harsher moral beliefs, much as darker color-experiences cause beliefs that objects are darker.

Since moral concepts are fundamentally perceptual, moral reasoning resembles reasoning about color. We can investigate the rightness of controversial actions and the colors of distant things. We can maintain theoretically driven moral beliefs in the face of counterintuitive consequences, and maintain remembered color beliefs in the face of acknowledged color illusions.[27] But just as color belief alone doesn't cause color experience or action, moral belief alone doesn't cause moral feeling or actions. Desire must combine with either type of belief to motivate action or generate new desire. The dotted arrows below represent these forms of moral reasoning. Solid arrows represent causation of moral feeling, belief, and motivation when emotional dispositions are activated:



Moral beliefs are systematically correlated with motivation because emotional dispositions generate both motivation and the feelings that cause moral beliefs. Many people also have *de dicto* desires to act morally, which combine with their moral beliefs to motivate action. But moral belief isn't sufficient to motivate or generate desire. Moral feeling however is sufficient to cause moral belief, just as color-sensation is sufficient to cause

[22] Sinhababu (2017).

[23] Deonna and Teroni (2012), Kauppinen (2013), Tappolet (2016), Werner (2016).

[24] Schnall et al. (2008).

[25] Laham et al. (2009).

[26] Haidt (2001).

[27] May (2018).

color-belief. Since moral belief is distinctively generated by pleasant or unpleasant experience, and lacks motivational properties distinguishing it from other beliefs, moral concepts concern experience, not action. The hedonic analysis accordingly applies *should* to feelings, and accuracy naturalism reduces *should* to the general norm for experience.

The advantages of accuracy naturalism make moral sense theory better for naturalistic realists than practical anti-empiricism. Moral sense theory applies *should* to experience, which represents reality and should be accurate. Practical anti-empiricism applies *should* to action, which doesn't represent reality and can't be accurate. This matters for universality. Natural reality doesn't include universal (categorical) reasons for action. But as we'll see, it includes ways for experience to be universally accurate.

Einstein credits his discoveries partly to "Hume, whose *Treatise of Human Nature* I had studied avidly and with admiration shortly before discovering the theory of relativity. It is very possible that without these philosophical studies I would not have arrived at the solution" (140).[28] Discovering that spatiotemporal concepts were acquired empirically, rather than by synthetic *a priori* intuition, led Einstein to the structure of spacetime. Discovering the same about moral concepts leads to universal moral truth.

5 Qualitative Identity: x Makes Pleasure Accurate for All ↔ x is Pleasure

The hedonic analysis and accuracy naturalism entail that goodness makes pleasure universally accurate. The final premise of the Universality Argument is that qualitative identity constitutes universal accuracy. Pleasure therefore makes pleasure universally accurate, so pleasure is goodness. After considering forms of representation for which qualitative identity constitutes accuracy, we'll see why naturalistic alternatives like constructivism and externalism don't allow universal accuracy, and how qualitative identity does.

When qualitative identity constitutes perfect accuracy for representations, resembling what's represented makes them more accurate.[29] Examples include depiction, quotation, onomatopoeia, replicas, shape-perception, and empathy. These examples include both intentionally generated and experienced forms of representation. Considering them demonstrates how qualitative identity can constitute perfect accuracy.

For pictures, perfect accuracy is qualitative identity in how things look. As Ben Blumson (2014) argues in *Resemblance and Representation*, depictive accuracy consists in resemblance, with qualitative identity as its maximal form. A perfectly accurate picture looks exactly like what it depicts. In onomatopoeia, accuracy is sameness of sounds. "Vroom" accurately represents car sounds because it sounds like cars, while "oink" inaccurately represents car sounds because it doesn't sound like cars. In quotation, accuracy is sameness of words.[30] Quotations with different words than the original are inaccurate. For replicas, total qualitative identity is perfect accuracy. An exact duplicate is a perfectly accurate replica.

Qualitative identity can also constitute perfect accuracy for experience. In shape-perception, sameness of shape is accuracy. Squares in your visual field accurately represent

[28] Slavov (2020).

[29] Legg (2008).

[30] Johnson (2018).

squares in front of you. This is why John Locke calls shape a "primary quality" – a property that resembles experiences representing it.[31] In empathy, accuracy is sameness of feeling. If you feel sad in empathizing with your friend, and your friend is actually happy, you misrepresent your friend's feelings in empathy. Referencing Lockean primary qualities, Colin Marshall (2016) notes that "resemblance holds when one is *pained* by another's *pain* or *pleased* by another's *pleasure*." Shape-perception and empathy provide useful precedent for applying qualitative identity to pleasure, which is also an experience.

Other naturalistic accounts of representation, like constructivism and externalism, don't uphold universality. They make experience accurate about different things for different possible perceivers. This is suitable for color and other Lockean secondary qualities, which don't resemble experience, but not for morality. Seeing why they don't uphold universality helps in understanding how qualitative identity does.

Constructivism treats accuracy as determined by what pleases a narrower range of moral perceivers – perhaps one's culture, or oneself. Constructivism is plausible about non-objective properties like fashionability, as cultural standards determine what's fashionable. Since different individuals and cultures feel differently about many things, constructivism doesn't uphold universality even among actual moral perceivers, making pleasure accurate about different things for different people.

Externalist views might treat pleasure as accurate about what systematically causes it, or what stands in a self-stabilizing correlation with it.[32] Externalism is plausible for secondary qualities like color, for which objectivity without universality is appealing. If humans see lemons as yellow while aliens with inverted color spectra see them as purple, externalism says their experiences both are objectively accurate, as they don't disagree. Color concepts may indeed be structured so that humans and aliens with different experiences don't disagree. But as *Star Trek* episodes and Moral Twin Earth cases illustrate, moral concepts allow disagreement with alien communities.[33] If aliens claim that famine is good, we can disagree with them. Our disagreement concerns whether all should feel hope or horror about famine.

If qualitative identity constitutes accuracy, all pleasure in moral feeling is accurate if it's about something identical to itself, namely pleasure. It's inaccurate if it's not about pleasure. It's especially inaccurate about displeasure. This applies to all, so all should hope for the same thing: pleasure itself. Qualitative identity provides universal accuracy-conditions for the moral feelings of all, upholding universality.

Universal accuracy requires pleasure to have the same object for all, regardless of contingencies such as prevailing social conventions and widespread error. Empathy illustrates how qualitative identity provides universal accuracy. Suppose someone reads a story about a world where all the empathizers misread people's faces, so they feel happy for sad people and sad for happy people. If a character in the story is happy, and the reader empathizes with the character, the reader should feel happy rather than sad. This is true even if most people in the reader's world have a convention of feeling the opposite of how others feel, as the reader will empathize accurately by violating the convention. Constructivism can turn prevailing social conventions into accuracy-conditions; externalism can convert widespread error into accuracy-conditions. Qualitative identity determines accuracy-conditions

[31] Locke (1689).

[32] Boyd (1988), Dowell (2016).

[33] Rubin (2008), Sinhababu (2019).

independent of these contingencies, giving all metaphysically possible moral perceivers the same accuracy-conditions.

Moral feeling represents moral reality like a picture. Empathic feeling similarly represents others' feelings like a picture. All should feel the same way when empathizing with you – the way you feel. Otherwise, their empathic feelings inaccurately depict your feelings. All should have similarly pleasant and unpleasant moral feelings about a situation, matching pleasure and displeasure in the relevant parts of the situation. Otherwise, their moral feelings inaccurately depict its moral significance.

Qualitative identity is the simplest possible relation of accuracy that upholds universality. Numerical identity – sameness between anything and itself – may be simpler. But it violates universality, entailing a reflexive and egoistic hedonism where each instance of pleasure is accurate only about itself. Constructivism and externalism violate universality too. Qualitative identity is the simplest way, and perhaps the only naturalistic way, for moral feeling to be universally accurate.

The Universality Argument favors a variety of pleasurepilled normative ethical principles, including longtermism.[34] Suppose utilitarian botanists of the future genetically modify plants to have the neural correlates of pleasure in humans. Such plants could experience great pleasure with minimal resource input, enabling environmentally sustainable long-term pleasure-generation. Utilitarian astronauts might terraform lifeless planets to grow vast fields of these pleasure plants. The plants' experiences would be pleasant like hope, so all should hope humanity achieves the godlike destiny of creating these exoplanetary heavens. Since all should be proud to bring about what all should hope for, and what all should be proud to do is right, all should take pride in rightly assisting these gardeners of the galaxy.

Definitions of moral terms and lawlike empirical generalizations suggest longtermist conclusions. All should have pleasant feelings like hope about good events. Hoping for good things accurately represents their moral character. Qualitative identity is the only empirically observed form of universal accuracy. It makes hope equally accurate about equal amounts of pleasure for anyone at any time. So future pleasure should be promoted like pleasure today. All pleasure is universal moral value, which all should hope for, and take pride in promoting.

Kant explains universality by invoking the free will of rational agents, which makes them citizens of the Kingdom of Ends, governed by its laws of freedom. But these laws of freedom don't apply to desire-driven creatures like us. Only laws of nature do, and the simplest explanation of the empirical evidence reveals them. From experience we discover the non-Euclidean shape of the starry heavens above, and pleasure's identity with goodness as the moral law within.[35]

[34] MacAskill (2022).

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