Telic Hypotheses
and Human Ethics

Steve Byerly
March 2011
Telic Hypotheses and Human Ethics

1.1 What Is Meant By Saying That Humans Have A Telos

1.2 Introduce Three Ways of Talking About Teleology

1.2.1 Projectionist Teleology

1.2.2 Empiricist Teleology

1.2.3 Objective Teleology

1.3 What Will Not Be Argued For

1.3.1 No Taxonomy Nor A List of Moral Principles

1.3.2 No Detailed Decision Procedure

2 Ethical Intuitionism (EI)

2.1 A Brief Sketch of EI

2.2 The Problem of Moral Knowledge

3 Three Hypotheses About Telos, Conscience and Symbolism

3.1 The Existence of Objective Goods and Rights

3.2 What Is Conscience?

3.2.1 Common Descriptions of Conscience

3.2.2 Instances of Conscientious Thinking: Sins Against Conscience

3.2.3 Moral and Hypothetical Judgments

3.3 Conscience Through Cognitive Faculties: Possible Refinement of Intuitive Capacities

3.4 Attempting a Summary of Conscience

3.4.1 Conscience, Faculties and Competence

3.4.2 Some Accounts of Conscience

3.4.3 Apparently Consistent Conjecture with Telic Hypotheses

4 Select Criticisms of Deontology and Utilitarianism
4.1 Schopenhauer’s Criticisms of Kantian Deontology

4.1.1 Kant’s Foundation of Morality is Doubted

4.1.2 Rationality May Be Very Different From What Kant Presents

4.1.3 Further Reasons to Doubt Kant’s Notion of Rationality

4.1.4 Kantian Deontology Leads also to Absurd Conclusions

4.2 Select Criticisms of Utilitarianism

4.2.1 Utilitarianism is Fundamentally Wrong

4.2.2 States-of-affairs Cannot be Recognized as Good or Bad Without Appeal to Conscience

4.2.3 Personal Integrity

4.2.4 Utilitarianism is Practically Wrong

5 Telic Responses and Suggestions to Further Direction

5.1 Telic Responses to Kantianism and Utilitarianism

5.2 Directions and Asides

5.2.1 Possible Routes and Ambitious Directions for Further Study

5.2.2 Highly Ambitious Last Notes

6 Notes and Addenda
Telic Hypotheses and Human Ethics

If there is a kind of objective and transcendental character to righteousness in human life, it would make sense that there was a stable reality behind our moral feelings and intuitions. To this end, I will begin an inquiry into why we have objectivity in what is right and wrong. It will be performed as follows: This work will be devoted to three objectives: 1) Present a set of three conscientious and telic hypotheses, relating to conscience and human’s having a telos. 2) Two sets of criticisms will be raised against Kantian Deontology and Utilitarianism. 3) The contended errors with Kantian Deontology and Utilitarianism will be shown to be consistent with the hypotheses above.

The three proposed hypotheses are this: i) There is a human telos that is transcendental and objective, and which provides the source for our objective goods and moral intuitions, ii) conscience, which works through human limitations, is somehow aware of the telos, and can intuit the telos, iii) Conscience interacts symbolically through volition in the world by jointly apprehending the telos and a person’s character in light of the understanding of the telos.

But there is much to clarify in way of terminology. We will begin with teleology generally.

1.1 What is Meant by Saying That Humans Have a Telos?

If we have moral intuitions, by virtue of being healthy human beings, then there should be a source of these intuitions. Is this source some structure inside us? Is there something humans are connected to? Or aware of?

The tradition of Ethical Intuitionism (EI) maintains that there is in fact objective moral goods and truth. I will first briefly lay out what the tradition of EI says and attempt to build on it from there. Secondly, three hypotheses, regarding telos and conscience, will be laid out with some possible descriptions of what they might mean. Third, some select criticisms will be
introduced against Deontology and Utilitarianism. Fourth, some telic responses to these criticisms will be offered. Fifth, possible implications and directions for further thought will be made. The aim of this work is not to construct a proof that ‘humans have a telos’, but simply to propose a set of hypotheses, discuss some possible implications of these hypotheses, and see, then, whether or not further discussions may prove intellectually fruitful.

1.2 Introduce Three Ways of Talking about Teleology:

**Projectionist, Empiricist and Objectivist:** Projectionist teleology is the idea that objects of thought *appear* to have a teleology, and that our language about teleology stems from these appearances. Empiricist teleology is the idea that intelligible descriptions of certain lawful behaviors can be made about the world around us. Objectivist teleology says more than both projectionist and objectivist teleology do, namely, that there is more than appearances, and that there is even more than merely lawful regularities captured by theories based on empirical data.

1.2.1 Projectionist teleology

Like the name might indicate, projectionist teleologists use purposive terms to describe things, organs, and organisms; they project onto the world we perceive. The purpose of the heart is to circulate blood, and in light of this purposive projection, a doctor or biologist can say whether there is *something functionally wrong* (or right). There are variations of this type of thinking, and the philosopher who comes quickest to mind is Kant. Kant held that humans *think* teleologically. He made a distinction between regulative concepts and constitutive concepts. Teleological concepts, according to Kant, were regulative. That is to say, Kant saw that “teleological judgments are merely “regulative” (heuristic, hypothetical, abductive), not “constitutive” or “determining” (objectively valid, empirically meaningful, deductive).”

---

Kantian discipleship, however, is far from a unanimous voice. But for the sake of simplicity, projectionist teleology will be described as a type of language of purposive or functional aspects about things, organs or organisms. However, like Kant, many projectionists are only comfortable with using the language of teleology, while clarifying that they do not actually believe there is anything objective about the teleology *i.e.* the heart’s apparent purpose is to pump blood; but this does not mean that there is a design behind this, or something objective about it. This may be implicit in Kant’s distinction between regulative and constitutive, but I will leave that for Kant scholars.

Kant said we think in teleological terms, and that this was in-line with, and derived from, the structural contributions from the mind itself. The apparent teleology was from the human mind and not from the objective (constitutive) reality outside of the mind.

### 1.2.2 Empiricist Teleology

Empiricist teleology is different from projectionist teleology insofar as the derivation is fixed on empirical studies (teleology comes from consistently observed behavior). The commitments of an empiricist teleology, as here stated, are very minimal. Quite simply, the world around us moves about in a lawful fashion, and by empirical study a teleological theory may be constructed that can usefully describe this lawful behavior. Empiricist teleology may be called a theory of meaning, as the theory claims nothing other but to an intelligible operational account of the world around us (or objects of thought in the world); whereas projectionist teleology may be called a theory of how the human mind operates (seeing things *as if* there were tele). Empiricist teleology may be compatible with projectionist teleology (at least as described

---

2 Here there will be no distinction made between ‘functional’ and ‘purposive’.
above), insofar as the empiricist teleologian may agree that something is being projected, but the crux is how and why teleological concepts should be constructed.

Empiricist teleology looks for more specific methods of determining the function or purpose that the given organism (or organ/artifact) possesses. For instance, sometimes goal-directedness is primary, or plasticity (empirical observation of variation of methods while the goal remaining fixed\textsuperscript{4}). The emphasis is where the basis of teleology resides. The projectionist points to the structure of the mind as the source of telic appearances, but the empiricist points to the theory intentionally built by the human mind as telic.

If measurements inform the teleological content then the basis is empiricist. If the structure of the mind informs the teleological content, it is projectionist. Much can be said about possible compatibility and incompatibility of these different stances, but for the present purposes it will be left very general, as these are only introductions into the language of teleology so work can be done with clarity. Both projectionist and empiricist teleology will be rejected as either incomplete or wrong.

1.2.3 Objective Teleology

What do we have left if the purposive terms are neither solely mental projections, nor solely terms based on short-hand descriptions of empirical observations? Many uncomfortable notions, for some, will be involved here. It will be maintained throughout this work that a kind of objective teleology exists and that even though projectionist and empiricist teleologians may be able to talk about things intelligibly, objectivist teleology is asserting more than the projectionist or empiricist. ‘Objective’ is meant here to contrast a kind of subjective teleology. For instance, it

\textsuperscript{4} If a goal can be fixed and the methods to getting to the goal may change, this is plasticity. If you move the food of an ant to a further point, and the ant changes its course \textit{in order} to get the food, some might consider this plasticity: Braithwaite, R. B. (1946). Teleological explanations: The presidential address. Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 47, i-xx.
will be hypothesized that a human being has a *telos*, and that this telos is objectively existent whether it is subjectively recognized or not. In other words, telos means purpose. Humans have a purpose. It is transcendental in the sense that it is not constrained or modified by subjective experience (though apprehension is different from modification). The exact nature of the telos will be left to the imagination at this point, yet suggestions will be made.

1.3 What Will Not Be Argued For

1.3.1 No Taxonomy Nor A List of Moral Principles

A taxonomy of virtues and vices will not be explicitly argued for, as necessary for the present hypotheses, nor a list of prohibitions and permissions. There will be some minimal assumptions about popular conceptions of “virtue and vice” and “right and wrong” to be known by the reader. However, there will be suggestions, but these suggestions will be explicitly made without pretenses that they must follow from the hypotheses.

1.3.2 No Detailed Decision Procedure

There will be no detailed account of the specific manner of choosing one moral intuition over another, nor will there be presented a program by which to choose one ethical principle over another. Very general suggestions will be made, however, as we near some attempts to understand the function of conscience (sect. 3.4.2).

However, throughout this work there will be an assumption that there is at least one legitimate moral intuition. Will this imply that there can be one fundamental ethical principle?

---

5 A teleology is subjective iff it depends on the existence of human minds. An objective teleology could exist without any human minds apprehending it (but, of course, humans need to exist with a telos, yet their telos is not existentially dependant on their being apprehended by other human minds).

6 Here there is a presumed difference between an intuition and principle. A principle can be satisfied but an intuition, presumably, is something that is present in a given experience. The categorical imperative is a principle that can be satisfied. *If* this, *then* that, etc. An intuition is either there or it isn’t. An intuition may fall in-line with a principle (maybe good acts are only good if there is an intuition of benevolence), but an intuition itself cannot be satisfied or unsatisfied.
Maybe. Some suggestions will be made, yet this will not be a chief focus. We will now look at what EI says about defending objectivity in moral intuition.

2 Ethical Intuitionism (EI)

2.1 A Brief Sketch of EI

At the end of *Ethical Intuitionism* Michael Huemer concludes the basic positions of EI (underlined terms clarified in sect. 2.2):

1. Evaluative statements assert propositions, which can be true or false. (*Non-Cognitivism* is false.)
2. They are not always false. (*Nihilism* is false.)
3. The truth of an evaluative statement is not subjective or relative. (*Subjectivism* is false.)
4. Evaluative facts cannot be reduced to non-evaluative facts, nor can they be known solely on the basis of observation. (*Naturalism* is false.)

   From these points, it follows that:

5. Some evaluative statements are true. (From 1, 2.)
6. Some evaluative statements are objectively true. (From 3, 5.)
7. There are irreducible, objective, evaluative facts, which cannot be known on the basis of observation. (From 4, 6.)

Some basic principles about good, bad, right, and wrong are self-evident, such as the following:

   Suffering is bad.

   If A is better than B and B is better than C, then A is better than C.

   If an action is wrong, then any qualitatively indistinguishable action (identical circumstances) is also wrong.
No person is blameworthy for an action they did not perform.\textsuperscript{7}

These principles are self-evident in the same sense that the following are:

Nothing is both red and green.

If A is next B, then B is next to A.

Yellow is a color.

Everything is identical with itself.

2.2 The Problem of Moral Knowledge

How do we deal with evaluative truths? Several theories:

1. \textit{Non-cognitivism}: holds that there are no evaluative truths because there are no evaluative propositions. Propositions, presented to be ‘evaluative propositions’ would be held by a non-cognitivist to be \textit{really} something like an emotional outburst or gesture, rather than any real indication of an objective statement. However, there seems to be no convincing evidence that this is case. Replacing a moral word in an evaluative proposition, with an emotional word, like ‘Murder is wrong’, with ‘Murder is boo’, makes no sense. Clearly, ‘wrong-ness’ indicates something quite different than ‘boo-ness’ (or any other merely emotional indicator word).

2. \textit{Nihilism}: Nihilists deny the truth of all positive evaluative claims. Even claims as strong as “Murder is wrong”, or “The holocaust was wrong”. Nihilism begins with an absurdity (namely, that we can meaningfully argue that meaning is meaningless) and lacks sufficient support to override the conviction, generally, that moral intuitions do in fact provide insight into what is right and wrong.

3. \textit{Subjectivism}: Subjectivists point out the attitude of an agent in relation to her beliefs, like ‘x is wrong’, as if the attitude was the fundamental reality of a proposition (rejecting any objective

\textsuperscript{7} Telic ethics may go beyond mere actions, encompassing even desires and volition, but EI is simply the starting point. This will be more developed in section 3.
correspondence relation). From this they then emphasize how prevalent disagreements are in ethical discussions. This is true: some do argue about what is right and wrong, virtuous and vicious. However, the simple observation of conflict is more plausibly an index of perceived relevance than anything else (we argue about things which have grave implications). If even one moral intuition can be agreed on (and even this isn’t itself truth), it seems that skepticism goes too far. Disagreement does not necessitate anything except disagreement.

4. Ethical naturalism: For the naturalist, even evaluative knowledge is empirical, and as such can be ‘obtained’ from empirical research. Those who hold this position try to say that morally charged propositions ultimately can be boiled down to non-evaluative propositions. The problem is, this is simply not true, which can be shown by a simple analysis of concepts using ethically evaluative propositions.8 ‘Good’ cannot be reduced to something non-evaluative while still possessing same the content, and thus is not identical with a non-evaluative concept.

5. Ethical intuitionism (EI): This is the alternative proposed against the four positions above. Here, evaluative knowledge is a priori, and can never be solely empirical. That is to say, something non-evaluative and external can never acquire an emergent value outside of an evaluative intuition. This is consistent with ‘Hume’s Law’, where Hume contends that a simple ought-statement can never be derived from a simple is-statement. Yet, where Hume fails to explain why one desire can be chosen over another, EI goes beyond this problem of moral indecision (if based solely on desires) with an explicit appeal to ethical intuition, which is more than simply a prevailing desire but something different, something particularly moral. Simply appealing to strength does not explain righteousness, unless we can satisfactorily conclude that when speaking of passions, ‘might makes right’. But might certainly does not make right, and the strongest desire does not equate to righteousness.

That is to say: Some evaluative truths are self-evident and come to be known through ‘ethical intuition.’ All other evaluative knowledge depends on those. This is consistent with the Foundationalist epistemology also.\textsuperscript{9} It is conformable to natural intuition and explains the \textit{is/ought} gap mentioned above. However, these insights would not make sense if non-cognitivism, subjectivism, nihilism or naturalism were true.

Moral intuition, using the language of Phenomenal Conservatism (PC), is an appearance where ostensible defeaters are found to be \textit{not} credible.\textsuperscript{10} The question about why we have moral intuitions is the task at hand. What could possibly cause and explain such phenomena as moral intuition in human beings?

\textbf{3 Three Hypotheses About Telos, Conscience and Symbolism}

\textbf{3.1 Existence of Objective Goods and Right}

If there are objective values, about what is good and right, why are there? What is behind this human phenomenon?

Accepting the fact that objective goods exist is very different from saying something further, that there is, in fact, a reason \textit{why} objective goods exist. This is the task at hand.

It will be hypothesized in this section that there is a specific reason why humans have objective goods and notions of righteousness. EI provides convincing arguments to believe that objective goods and right exist, and here we will try to see how far we can get by trying to polish off a very old idea. This idea is the \textit{telos}. In the following sections, the idea that humans have a purpose, or telos, will be brought into more modern discussions of ethics, whereby we will entertain the idea that a human being can sense this purpose.

\textsuperscript{9} A defense of this can be seen in Huemer’s \textit{Ethical Intuitionism}, chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{10} According to PC, ‘perceptual seemings’ are \textit{appearances}: “If it seems to S as if P, then S thereby has at least prima facie justification for believing that P.” Huemer, M. \textit{Skepticism and the Veil of Perception}. (99)
One demanding question, perhaps, is this: Given the incredibly disparate circumstances between Plato and Aristotle and the modern academic, separated by millennia, language, geography, and culture, why is it that their ethical and philosophical discussions are still intelligible and germane?

I will submit that the answer is not so surprising, considering the fact that there may exist, between those ancient philosophers and us, something of appreciable and explanatory power. Just as Aristotle and Plato had a telos, so do we. However, the hypothesis that humans have a telos requires a further hypothesis which brings the telos into our daily experience. There seems to be a transcendental, objective, and internalist aspect to moral intuitions: it will be hypothesized that this is due to humans being aware of some purposive ideal, and this awareness is through conscience.

There must be a way for humans to interact with the telos, if there is such a thing, and according to this need, we will discuss conscience as a plausible candidate. If humans have a telos and intuit this telos through conscience, then there should be ways of talking about this interaction.

3.2 What is Conscience?

What exactly is conscience, and how does conscience intuit the telos? First, a brief list of very general and common descriptions about the conscience will be made. Instances of conscientious thinking will be discussed, and then finally the views of other philosophers will be mentioned. If possible, a definition of conscience and telos will be attempted.

3.2.1 Common Descriptions of Conscience
Conscience is sometimes described as a voice inside of us, as a guide, as a feeling, and sometimes even as a window to the divine.

Whether or not these characterizations of conscience are ultimately concluded to be metaphorical, it is perhaps plausible that if a person has ever had an ethical dilemma, this is some proof that the word ‘conscience’ is intelligible to that person. Even if a person has never seen Pinocchio and his grasshopper, or if they have never read any scholastic discussions about conscience, the term ‘conscience’ should be broadly understandable, even if not exhaustively comprehended in a greater philosophical field.\(^1\) But there are worries associated with the different types of characterizations made above.

Calling the conscience a voice brings worries by invoking questions of mental stability and schizophrenia. Telling your philosophy professor that you hear a special voice on the first day of class will hardly make the best impression (even if it did work for Socrates). Calling conscience a guide leads us to the question about where this guide comes from and why. Some might be comfortable with saying that ‘reason’ is such a guide, but even this leads to other worries about how reason *tells us anything*, because it is instrumental and driven by our desires (but perhaps this may be restricted to those who follow Hume\(^2\)). Nevertheless, the source of this guide raises questions.

Calling conscience a feeling might make some people nervous because feeling is often polarized with rationality. If we assume that feeling is on one end of a scale and reason is at the

\(^1\) Aquinas argued that conscience is “application of knowledge to activity”. Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, I.
\(^2\) If Hume is correct about reason being nothing more than a slave of the passions, there is a severe problem with thinking that reason tells us anything except what we want to hear. In a sense, the passions would always reject ‘reason’s counsel’. Arguably, this is happening all the time, but the hope that there is conscience might justify one passion over the other. Perhaps the love of truth, along with beauty, and justice and virtue, lend itself to our project of *using* reason. Huemer treats the ethical problem for Humean ethics in *Ethical Intuitionism* (pg 235).
other, then it might be insinuated that feeling is simply unreasonable…and thus summarily labeled as *irrational* with an obvious negative connotation (though a shrewd thinker should not make such a mistake). Irrational motives are then considered bad or wrong or immoral, and therefore feelings should be avoided (certainly not obeyed, so the thought is framed). It is not obvious, however, that intuitions are that different from feelings. They both appear to be felt, in some sense, even if they are not felt identically.

Calling conscience, finally, as having some kind of connection to the divine, has obvious worries for atheists, who might label such appeals as fundamentally irrational. If anything, this brief look at ways of thinking of conscience shows how very wide the scope is. As such, for now conscience will be left very broad.

The operation of conscience will be described simply with a story. Imagine walking into a classroom and on the chalkboard there is a simple equation: 1+1=2. You move your eyes left to right and back. You see that the left side says (1+1). You believe also that you see the meaning of the right side (2). How do you know it is ‘right’ or ‘correct’? You would be comfortable with saying that you have an intuition about it, right?

Nothing mysterious is being asked. When a person compares two sides of an equation they have a type of intuition or feeling in the mind (so to speak). In this work, it will be contended that philosophers can meaningfully discuss conscience as an intuitive faculty, by which the telos can, in a similar fashion, though perhaps not identically, be intuited like the inequality/equality of two sides of an equation. There is no doubt there are many implications involving such ideas. However, we will see how far we can go by hypothesizing that humans have a telos and that it is intuited via conscience. In the next section, various instances of
conscientious thought will be discussed. Conscientious thought can be described as nothing other than a type of thinking that involves moral intuitions through conscience (its precise nature will be part of the discussion). Further work on this can be read in Ross’s work.\textsuperscript{13}

If there is a telos, somehow transcendental and fixed, and there are some experiential similarities between different people as they intuit the telos, via conscience, one would then imagine that we could cite common examples of conscience.

3.2.2 Instances of Conscientious Thinking: Sins Against Conscience

One way that conscience is seen at work is through personal decisions. A person desires, wills, and acts, every single day, in ways that are susceptible to moral scrutiny. Desires, volitions, and acts will be hereafter abbreviated as DVA(s). Some DVAs are more ethically salient than others, but it would take a specific moral implication interpreted from an ethical theory to determine which particular decisions are more or less important. For instance, a Utilitarian might look at the effects, with respect to happiness or sorrow, but this judgment relies on the theory according to which ethical decisions are made. At this point we are not adopting such an ethical theory, but only looking at the phenomenal characteristics about which ethical theories might be adopted to explain.

For our purposes here, I will contend that every DVA a person has falls under the ethical sphere, and as such, is rightly susceptible to moral scrutiny, until we are confronted with a good reason to think otherwise. Including all decisions as falling under the moral scope, it may more easily be seen that many things involve conscience.

In addition to the dilemmas and trilemmas, discussed in philosophy classes, the less obvious moral decisions pertaining to overall ambitions, life pursuits, habits, and even standards

that people hold themselves accountable to (work ethic, discipline, etc)- these will also be assumed to fall within the moral sphere.

If every DVA is morally evaluable, then righteousness may involve more than what social and interpersonal empirical data ostensibly admit. Perhaps we can sin in our own heart, and desire ill things, wholly removed from all inter-personal observation?

3.2.3 Moral and Hypothetical Judgments

Moral judgments about DVAs might be seen in a wide array of ostensibly mental objects/complexes. For instance, real actions that can be observed and evaluated, in addition to the evaluations made about fictional stories involving characters making decisions and struggling after certain ends, and even counter-factual thinking about how decisions could have been different, or hypothetical thinking about the future: these all seem to possess a moral aspect. That is to say, DVAs, whether they are hypothetical, counterfactual, and even fictional, seem to all have a conscientious aspect.

Perhaps, under the present set of hypotheses, all decisions can be subject to moral scrutiny, and as the existence of conscience is integral to moral intuition, its operation is involved in mental activities ostensibly unrelated to direct effects in the world. In this case, conscience is absolutely pervasive in all human thought, presuming certain healthy preconditions.

Along this train of thought, even analyzing a fictional character’s behavior is a moral endeavor, just as analyzing one’s own possible decisions, another person’s behavior, and even one’s greater ambitions in life are moral endeavors. Many assumptions are being made here. For instance, it is assumed that Martin Luther King’s overall struggle was better than Hitler’s struggle (‘struggle’ is used here as broadly describing the priorities a person possesses in life that
guide and define their lives). Can this be judged and logically proved at this stage?—No it cannot. However, there is an appeal to the reader’s moral intuition. Some issues of conscience can be relatively judged without laborious argument. The comparative moral ambitions between Martin Luther King and Hitler, I number among these examples.

By expanding on the present hypotheses about the existence of a human telos, and that conscience intuits the telos, it is further assumed that there is no relevant difference between a person’s most general raison d’être, her decisions on a given Tuesday involving a trolley and a fat man, or critically examining a fictional hero or villain from a book. It seems that there is no reason to think, at this stage, that conscience is active only in certain situations, but rather, that every DVA possesses a moral aspect, as conscience is integral to the person’s overall understanding of life as a whole, and her life day-to-day. Even deciding to scratch one’s leg is morally evaluable. It may be that scratching your leg is perceived as being morally neutral, but this is a conscientious thought, is it not?14 That is, an appeal to conscience is made to determine the moral relevance or irrelevance to the DVA.

However, surely, there are differences between some decisions and others, from a moral standpoint. What is the relevant difference between an ostensibly moral decision (whether to lie or not) and an ostensibly and morally neutral decision (choosing between chocolate ice cream of vanilla)? At this point: What possible implication could a person draw from the choice of scratching one’s leg, or preferring rocky road over vanilla?

If proper moral judgments flow from moral intuitions, to inferences based on these intuitions, and moral intuition generally is itself fundamentally purposive in nature, then perhaps moral evaluations are ultimately inferences based on implied purposes compared against a

---

14 It is not obvious how the act of scratching one’s leg could ever be construed as emblematic of one’s purpose. This will be discussed further in sect. 3.
purposive ideal (telos)? In cases where implications are indiscernible to purpose, irrespective of consequence, these DVAs may be deemed morally neutral. The relevance of this is contingent on whether or not moral judgments are purposive or not.

3.3 Conscience Through Cognitive Faculties: Possible Refinement of Intuitive Capacities

Humans are complex. In addition to our manifest complexity, relatively speaking to other animals, humans are also aware of some of their limitations. Humans are limited in how fast they can process information cognitively (reading, math, speaking, etc). They are limited in how far they can see, what frequencies of sound they can hear, and how readily complex conceptual structures intelligibly connect to each other. Though there are disputes about the precise nature of our limitations, there are few credible, if any, disputes about the simple fact that humans are limited. We wrestle with our limitations through hard work and attention to detail. The relevance of speaking of ‘limitations’, rather than just ‘capacities’, is that capacities are understood by pushing against the limitations inherent in the nature of the capacity; or in other words, to say the capacity of a given kind exists in a human agent, is to say that the agent can do something specific within her limitations. To say that a task or work is beyond a person’s limitations means, likewise, the task or work is beyond their capacity. Yet ethics, in some sense, is about what is cognizable, what is predictable. If we fail to understand capacity in terms of limitations, we may be more likely to go beyond them.

That is to say, if we mistake the bounds of our abilities we will inappropriately use abilities (or attempt to use). If someone told you to bench-press a thousand pounds, you would look at her strangely, because it is clearly beyond your limitations. This does not mean necessarily that you know the precise strength you possess in the weight room either, but it does
involve at least a minimal understanding that you have limits and exceeding this limit is not
good.

If conscience works through limitations, it would, one would think, be similarly strange
(like weightlifting) to imagine an ethicist to tell you to ‘buy into’ the idea that the rightness and
wrongness of a given decision was determined by an impossibly impersonal view of the world,
or perhaps a kind of infinite calculus that ultimately depends on your own conscientious
reflection. If there are limitations, whereby if they are exceeded it is an example of
misunderstanding (and thereby misusing) the capacity, and human intuitions are bound by these
limitations, then understanding the bounds of moral intuition affects the bounds of possible
ethical theory.

Notice also that human limitations can only be focused on indirectly, or via some kind of
measurement. Anytime a person develops a skill, they wrestle with the limitations, and in a
way, they aim to refine their capacities. A musician learns how to perfect her musical skills in
listening and playing through practice. A mathematician refines her memory and mental habits
through practice. This is relevant because perfectibility, refinement, and development of any
human capacity work through the limitations and nature of the relevant capacity. A person
knows about their limitations through working with them. Nevertheless, it is hard to put one’s
finger on the limitations exactly. Because improvement is observed, comparing the present with
the past, a person can infer that their actual capacity to do something has changed. The path
through which the change proceeds indicates limitation, and the ability to ‘hone one’s skills’
seems to indicate something of the nature of the agent. If moral intuition is limited but
perfectible, this would be a moral reason to habitually focus on these intuitions, because
character may be perfectible by such a habit.

\[15\] Some measurements I have in mind are studies about the human Echoic Buffer, or eye tests, etc.
If conscience is connected to apparently non-moral faculties and those are perfectible individually, it might be the case that conscience can be refined similarly. Perhaps we can learn something about conscience by looking at other aspects of human cognition and intuitions? I submit that many ethical disagreements arise from specific commitments from ideas of conscientious limitations. For instance, if we are committed to thinking that righteousness is confined to happiness/suffering then we have specific tensions about epistemological limitations of what happiness/suffering is. If we are committed to ideas of selfless non-sentimental duty we are then committed to the epistemological limitations which are in tension with the very means (conscience) by which we intuit the concept of selflessness and duty.

Furthermore, if we fail to account for the limitations of ethical intuitions, we can never know when our moral reasoning is appropriately within our limitations or inappropriately beyond our capacities. If conscience is always needed in determining the rightness or wrongness of an action, then any ethical theory which tries to bypass this role of intuition is a kind of scientism, gratuitously disjointing the subjective from the objective world.

The lesson may be this: The limitations of a given capacity should be understood first, and the given capacity (here, moral intuition) should only be evaluated in light of these limitations. If a person is ever offered an ethical theory that requires them to operate beyond their capacities, this might indicate that the ethical theory is wrong or untenable. If this is right, then it would seem appropriate to look at how conscience works, and what moral competence might look like.

3.4 Attempting a Summary of Conscience

3.4.1 Conscience, Faculties and Competence

---

16 cf. sect 4.1, sect 4.2*
The third hypothesis is that conscience works through other faculties not usually considered being strictly moral. That is to say, the ability to compute a sum in math, or the ability to see a conceptual entailment in logic, these abilities a person possesses, by themselves, appear to have nothing to do with moral intuition; in the sense that they perform other functions not apparently moral.

Faculties are to be understood functionally, whereby the faculty is simply a tag to the manifest capacity of operation. This is not to say there is a spatial locus of any faculty (in response to something like a pineal gland). The faculty of language can be described as the capacity a person has to understand, communicate and manipulate symbols, and there is no presumption of thinking that a specific ‘thing’ makes linguistic ability possible, nor any absolute assertion about distinct parts. The composition through which conscience functions is relevant to understand moral competence. If we understand that conscience is a composite process, then we may have insight of where to look for moral competence.

It is possible to speak about the rational faculty, or the linguistic faculty, or the intuitive-emotive faculty, without imagining an implausible ‘thing’ that rationalizes, an organ that specifically performs language, or an apparatus that permits intuition and emotions. It is not necessary to harbor pretenses about how exactly rationality works mechanically or physiologically or that rationality exists outside human minds, except that somehow the brain is involved, and in certain cases damage prevents the proper functioning of these faculties. If the rational faculty is functioning, then we can say that rationality is healthy, operative, unimpaired, etc. If the faculty of language is damaged we could say a given person lacks sufficient ability to operate with communicative symbols. This way of speaking allows us to talk about the
interdependence of language with rationality and other types of cognition, without confining us to speaking gratuitously, about specific faculties, as if they somehow exist by themselves.

Now, if there is something transcendental, as a source of our objective moral intuitions (telos), and conscience intuits the telos through limited faculties, it seems plausible that conscience operates in ways that other human faculties operate. Specifically, if conscience is symbolically interacting with the telos, like language and logic and mathematics all use symbols. Though it might make similar sense, I think, to say that conscience interacts conceptually with the telos, but a symbol generally implies a connection between two or more things, where a concept does not seem to imply this. Also, it seems that ‘symbolic interaction’ says less, and is safer in another way, insofar as it is left open as to the nature of the content that the symbol is participating with. By interaction, it is simply meant that ideas are applied to the world, and that the world informs at least some of our ideas (without any explicit presumptions beyond this). It is not clear to me, for example, the exact differences between non-conceptual content and conceptual content when conscience is in operation and to what degree a telic apprehension is partially conceptually grasped or, whether it is simply non-conceptual. So, I will prefer to say that conscience works in a symbolic way rather than conceptual (though it does seem that concepts are involved somehow).

An idea of a DVA may function as a symbol for the telos, which may or may not match up intuitively (see diagram pg. 30). Maybe a logical operator might be similar? An equality sign (=) does not make much sense by itself, but only when more another concept is introduced for comparison. Likewise, a righteous or unrighteous act, perhaps, can only be understood by someone through some apprehension of the telos. That it is to say, as a person judges an act to be good or bad, noble or ignoble, etc, this person is engaged in conscientious thinking. Is this
comparative operation made possible through fully apprehended concepts? I cannot provide answer at the present time, but there certainly appears to be a relationship between the purposive ideal and a given DVA.

But regardless of how the cognitive mechanism actually works (behind the scenes, so to speak), which may actually be beyond our present understanding of cognitive science, conscience might work through these faculties in similar ways that the non-moral faculties use symbols to hold and convey meaning. Can a proposition be formed without symbols? No. Can a person evaluate an ethical situation without input from her conscience? No.

What if every moral intuition was like the introspective intuition of weighing two sides of an equation? For instance, 1+1+1 = 3: A person apprehends one side and then the other. Via the use of symbols and our apprehension of them, we “see” or “feel” how they fit together, and according to this consonant or dissonant feeling (perhaps lack of consonant feeling), we say it is right or wrong, respectively.

Yet, nevertheless, there is a transcendental and non-subjective moral reality. Actions, decisions, and desires symbolically represent a person’s character. That is to say, every action, decision, and desire, performed or imagined, is treated somehow as a token of a type, and the type in question is a human agent with a set of salient expressions; these salient expressions are the foci of moral dilemmas employed in thought experiments.

We now have three main hypotheses: 1) There is a human telos that is transcendental and objective, and which provides the source for our objective goods and moral intuitions 2) conscience, which works through human limitations, is somehow aware of the telos, and can
intuit the telos. 3) Conscience interacts symbolically through volition in the world by jointly apprehending the telos and a person’s character in light of the understanding of the telos. 17

3.4.2 Some Accounts of Conscience

Presuming that any given person, who is ‘fully-functioning’ i.e. possessing the capacity of being rational, engaging in symbolic apprehensions, and possessing healthy intuitive-emotive faculties, we will now start discussing what is right and wrong in their (our) decisions.

Here are some accounts by others to characterize conscience (underlines mine):

(i) “Conscience is the psychological faculty by which we are aware of and respond to the moral character of our own actions. It is most commonly thought of as the source of pains we suffer as a result of doing what we believe is wrong --- the pains of guilt, or “pangs of conscience.” It may also be seen, more controversially, as the source of our knowledge of what is right and wrong, or as a motive for moral conduct. Thus a person who is motivated to act on principle is said to act “conscientiously.” […] [for] sentimentalists and later utilitarians, conscience consists in the second-order sentiments of approval and disapproval we feel towards our own motives and sentiments. […] Butler identified conscience with a natural disposition to approve or disapprove of our motives and actions in accordance with reason and to act accordingly.” (Korsgaard) 18

Jeff White in Conscience: The Mechanism of Morality says this:

(ii) “Conscience concerns the situation of the whole organism, and consists in all systems, neural and peripheral, distributed throughout the body, working together to ensure the

---

17 Imagine the world’s most complex equation: On one side we have the apprehension of a single decision, priority, or desire, and on the other side the conscientious intuition of the telos.
survival of the organism, situation to situation, per the larger psychology of conscience as
developed herein.”

White continues also to characterize Kant’s account of conscience:

“The affect central to Kant’s moral theory is goodwill. What is good will? Earlier, in the
first section of The Metaphysics of Ethics, Kant tells us that the goodwill is “to be
considered, not the only and whole good, but as the highest good, and the condition
limiting every other good, even happiness […]” And, later, in the second section “That,
we now know, is a good will whose maxim, if made law universal, would not be
repugnant to itself”. Thus, it is good will both that one aspires to (insofar as one wishes to
be moral) and that guides action along the way. Here, it is important to note that
repugnance is another word for disgust, both of which are not concepts belonging to
reason, where typical misinterpretations on Kantian ethics place the locus of moral
motivation (in rationality), instead.19

How does good will work to motivate to moral ends via moral actions? By Kant’s
account, goodwill alone is not enough. One must also have in mind some exemplar, some
other embodied agent, whether real or ideal, in light of which one may, at least initially,
model ones actions, and thus eventually one’s self. The emotion that signifies the
importance of these examples is reverence, and in fact the object of reverence serves as
the measuring stick for one’s own moral worth. Kant tells us, in the notes to chapter 1,
that “What is called a moral interest, is based solely on this emotion”. And what is
reverence? Without prying any further detail directly from Kant’s own writings in
support of the claim, it can be understood, in contemporary terms, to involve the

19 Schopenhauer, perhaps, may fall into this camp, if White is correct about Kant. (See sect. 4.1)
employment of mirroring capacities of the human body to emulate, and so train, one’s self to adopt and thus become like another human being, whether that being be, on Kant’s account, real or ideal. Moral interest, thus, is fundamentally to become the best person one can become.”

The statements above about conscience have varied content, but I think it is possible, going along with the previous sections, to bring much of it together. The following concepts seem the chief ingredients for a possible definition of conscience: (i) conscience is a psychological faculty, (ii) there is a type of unity in conscience’s operation, (iii) goodwill is somehow apprehended, and striven after, through conscience, and (iv) conscience has a relation to an exemplar or ideal (telos).

A functional approach seems best fit for defining conscience. Agreeing with Korsgaard above, conscience is a psychological faculty, though it does not appear to be a simple function. It appears, rather, to be a complex of other psychological functions, involving cognitive machinery which provides humans with symbolic apprehension, manipulation, and intuition, yet coupled somewhere with emotive apprehensions (perhaps agreeing with White’s statements). Presupposing the telos as a part of our current project, and the intuitive similarities between the apprehensions of mathematical operations, like the quality/inequality of an equation, requiring at least some apprehension of both sides of the equation, and the comparison between DVAs of an individual being consonant with the apprehension of the telos, it seems plausible to imagine that conscience functions as a complex faculty through which the purposive ideal (telos) is compared to the DVAs. The unity of the organism, comprehended by conscience brings a given DVA to bear under a purposive understanding, where each DVA is evaluated in terms of telic intuition. A DVA is conscientiously thought to indicate the purpose of the agent, and thus purposive.
For instance, a moral thought might go like this: “If I kill a baby for my own convenience, then I would be a type of person who kills babies for my own convenience; such a person is not consonant with the telic ideal, therefore such an action is wrong.” This may or may not survive further moral reasoning but this makes sense according to how moral thought might work if the telic hypotheses were true. The telos, as the purposive ideal, tells us (through conscience) what we ought to be like (and ought not). However, the telos is only indirectly and comparatively apprehended.

By ‘indirectly’ I mean something like learning through intuitive feedback, and not something present before the mind that can be subject to logical decomposition. I have in mind something that is logically irreducible; the telos gives us a kind of feedback through conscience, but the telos is never fully comprehended. By intuitive feedback, I mean that we conceive of a DVA, and we have a moral intuition about it. Like all learning of cognitive skills, nuances come through careful attention (though we may not at present fully understand the mechanism). Since it seems that no one, aside from, perhaps, a miraculous exemplar like Jesus (possessing certain features that mere mortals like us do not have), comprehends perfect rightness or wrongness, and likewise does not possess exhaustive and perfect knowledge of the world, and further, no perfect comprehension of the telos (anthropology, even personal anthropology, is part of the objective world). But refinement is the issue. Moral intuitions can be refined. We do have the capacity to imagine a DVA and see how that fits or does not fit with moral intuition (resulting in moral feedback). A calculator only gives us a sum when we put in data. A moral intuition only comes

---

20 Even the most evidently wrong actions, in extreme circumstances, might be shown necessary to be trumped by other moral concerns. If war is ever permissible, for instance, many ostensibly wrong acts may be justifiable.
21 Moore argued that because ethical disputes cannot be resolved by appeal to the natural and social sciences, we should acknowledge that ethical values constitute an irreducible dimension of reality. Moore further held that friendship and beauty are pre-eminent among these values, and thus that the best of lives is a life successfully dedicated to their enhancement. Perhaps these irreducible dimensions are connected?
with experience and thought about the world, and agents in the world. A conscientious person puts in content, ‘consulting conscience’, about her active priorities, ambitions and daily choices.

So, we have indirect means of determining consonance with the telos. That is to say, our intuitive connection to the telos is indirectly apprehended by asking questions and presenting thought experiments, counterfactuals, etc (this is often done automatically). Picture a scene in which there is a suspicion that radiation is present. A Geiger-counter is presented to test this suspicion. The Geiger-counter indicates levels of radiation, but the Geiger-counter is not itself the cause of the radiation. In a similar fashion, perhaps, conscience compares an apprehension of DVAs (perhaps this content is at least partially grasped conceptually?) with the apprehension of the telos. This would be a telic apprehension which we would normally call a moral intuition.

But moral intuitions do not appear to be exactly like every other feeling. Moral intuitions have a kind of demand. They have imperative force, unlike mathematical intuitions. Because of the cognitive-emotive equipment in play, which we normally assume is morally relevant, when we encounter someone with faulty equipment, like sociopaths (perhaps lacking any kind of empathy), or the mentally handicapped (perhaps lacking reasoning/intuitive capacities), we have different moral expectations. Their Geiger-counter is faulty, so to speak.

When there is no faulty equipment presumed, where conscience is working properly, we present content of a DVA to conscience and see what the telic intuition says about it: What are the implications of such a desire, volition, or action? This might explain thoughts like this: “If I did this, I couldn’t live with myself,”—meaning, “I couldn’t live with the implication that I was such a person, who would do such things.” Some people only focus on their actions (and not volition and desires themselves), and their manifest social consequences, but heroes (supreme
moral examples), I submit, are always (or at least preeminently) the ones who concentrate on the volition and desire also. This makes sense with telic intuitions.

In sum, conscience is a complex faculty that enables us to compare DVAs to our apprehension of the telos. These are moral intuitions. DVAs are united purposively and compared to the purposive ideal, the telos, and the apprehension of goodwill is a signifier of telic consonance. Conscience unites DVAs as indicators of the purpose of the agent. Moral intuition can be refined, through experience and attention, like music, logical thinking, and mathematics. Telic intuition supports the cultivation of moral refinement, and makes progress intelligible (we can progress nearer to something, namely, the telos).

3.4.3 Apparently Consistent Conjecture with Telic Hypotheses

To the question—“Why be moral?”—the implications stemming from the previous work seems to be this: Telic ethics is eudaimonistic but still consequentialist, yet not externally consequentialist. Because conscience appears to be fundamental and integral to healthy human experience, and it is here assumed that well-being is connected to the telos, and the greatest and deepest fulfillment in life, a person needs to achieve consonance with the telos insofar as they need to be fully human.\footnote{This is expanded in sect. 4.2.1}
4 Select Criticisms of Deontology and Utilitarianism

4.1 Schopenhauer’s Criticisms of Kantian Deontology

4.1.1 Kant’s Foundation of Morality is Doubted

Kant, in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* says this about morality, that the “determination of scope is to be done not on the basis of principles of human reason that non-moral philosophy might allow or require, but rather (because moral laws are to hold for every rational being just because it is rational) by being derived from the universal concept of rational being.” (Ch. II)

However, what reason do we have to believe that rationality itself contains within it, the more specific, or perhaps wholly different, concept of morality? Some question the very idea that from pure conceptual analysis can yield anything useful and practical, and moral decisions,
certainly, are saliently practical. Further, why should we think that a person cannot be both rational and morally bad simultaneously?

Schopenhauer says this in *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, regarding rationality (the following excerpts are lengthy, but I found that my paraphrases were diminishing to the content):

All excellence of understanding, all prudence, sagacity, penetration, acumen consists of the *perfection* of this quite immediate grasp of *causal relations*: for this lies at the basis of all knowledge of *connection* of things in the broadest sense of the word. Its sharpness and correctness makes one person *more* through the ages, that a person was called *rational* who did not let himself be guided by *intuitive* impressions, but by *thoughts and concepts* and who, as a result, always works reflectively, consistently, and with circumspection. Such acting is universally called *rational acting*. However, in no way does this imply righteousness and loving kindness. Rather, one can work most rationally, and thus, reflectively, circumspectly, intentionally, methodically, and in doing so yet follow the most self-interested, unjust, even the most wicked maxims. Therefore, it occurred to no one before Kant to identify acting justly, virtuously, and nobly with acting *rationally*; rather, the two were considered to be completely different and kept separate. The one rests on the *type of motivation*; the other on the *differences among basic maxims*. Only after Kant, since virtue was supposed to arise simply from pure reason, are virtuousness and rationality one and the same, in spite of linguistic usage of all peoples, which is not accident, but the work of universal and, hence, unanimous human cognition. The rational and the vicious are quite compatible, and indeed only through their combination are

---

23 It might be said that Kant’s moral theory isn’t based on conceptual analysis— that it’s supposed to be ‘synthetic a priori true if true at all’, meaning that it is ‘necessarily & a priori true for rational human animals’. However, if this is the case, that there is anthropology necessarily included within the analysis (‘rational human animal’), in conjunction with a synthetic a priori theory of concepts, this still includes an anthropology, which Kant denies in order to be purely rational. (see sect. 5.1)
great, far-reaching crimes possible. In the same way, irrationality and noble-mindedness coexist quite well: e.g. if today I were to give to a poor person that which tomorrow I should myself need urgently as he, or if today I should allow myself to be carried away, sending a needy person a sum which my creditor awaits, and similarly in very many cases. (162)

However, extending Kant some charity, it might be said that it would be necessarily true, if rationality is morality, then ‘morally wrong’ simply means ‘rationally wrong’.24 But this is contrary to our moral intuitions, and Kant does little to overcome this when he is being explicit.25 Even more, if rationality is not morality, simply, how can we possibly learn about ethics is through mere analysis? This seems to be a real controversy. If rationality really did unfold itself into morality, why is it so counter-intuitive, so subtle?

4.1.2 Rationality May Be Very Different From What Kant Presents

Kant tries to establish his ethics as both universal and transcendental, which itself, from a psychological point of view, seems congruent with a moral reaction to various modes of subjectivism. As Schopenhauer points out, though Kant’s method of doing this may be well intentioned (rightly presupposing that there is a transcendental character to ethics, nonetheless), it is poorly executed. Poorly executed in the sense of not being fully justified, not poorly executed in the sense that Kant’s doctrine is not incredibly complex and sophisticated. Yet, sophistication does not equal truth. More specifically, as with the first objection, rationality is

24 Again, it might be further said that, according to Kant, what is moral is always to choose and act, from respect for oneself and other persons and the Moral Law innately specified within us, which gives us dignity. But even this further requires that rationality is completed by anthropology. Rationality + Telos would work, but Kant does not avail himself of this explicitly.

25 There are some who believe Kant is really teleological, closer to the objectivist sense, as described in sect. 1.1 and there are also others that might say that Kant equally relies on moral intuitions with pure rationality, but there is always the suspicion, in my mind, about why he would say things so apparently contrary [cf. Herman, B. & Hanna].
neither sufficient for morality, nor is there reason to believe that rationality is anything more than a cognitive operation.

Schopenhauer also points out that rationality is employed by Kant to describe something which humans are the only possessor, namely, something that philosophers have ever actually dealt with, unless they postulate angels or God. But even this, what indication, whatsoever, do we have to imagine that they, or He, would resemble our cognitive processes? Or in more interesting terms, what would a non-human rationality look like, and how could we possibly imagine what that would look like, considering our extremely limited phenomenal experience that is contributed from our extremely human faculties? Yet, Schopenhauer’s own words can hardly be replaced:

Meanwhile this assertion of morals is not for humans as humans, but rather for all rational beings as such, which for Kant is such an important main point and favorite idea that he never tires of repeating it at every opportunity. Against this, I say that one is never warranted in setting up a genus which is given to us in only a single species. One could bring to the concept simply nothing other than what one would have inferred of this single species. Thus, what one predicated of the genus, one would always have to understand of the single species alone. For in order for one to imagine the genus, one would have unwarrantedly to consider as non-existent what belongs to this species. But then one would perhaps have eliminated the very condition which makes possible the remaining properties hypostatized as genus. Just as we recognize intelligence generally as implying a property of only animal beings and, as a result, are never justified to think of this property as existing outside of and independent of animal nature, so, too, we recognize reason as a property of only the human race and are simply not warranted in
thinking of existing apart from this and setting up genus ‘rational being’ which would be different from its single species, ‘human’, still less, however, in setting up laws for such an imaginary *rational being in abstracto*. To speak of rational beings apart from humans is nothing other than if one wanted to speak of heavy beings apart from bodies. One could not help but suspect that in this Kant thought a bit about the dear little angels or, indeed, had counted their assistance in the conviction of the reader. […] Here, where the topic arises incidentally, I must be satisfied with the mere assertion of the contrary: namely, that reason, like the cognitive faculty in general, is something secondary, something belonging to appearance, indeed, something conditioned by the organism; whereas the real core, that which alone is metaphysical and, therefore, indestructible in the human being, is *will*. (ibid., 146-7)

So, if we agree with Schopenhauer, Kant relies on his own characterization of rationality, which is dubious. A full treatment is not possible here, but it should suffice to say simply that Kant talks about rationality as if it is an extra-human property of the universe. Though Kant does not explicitly say that the universe *has rationality*, Kant certainly elaborates (maybe gratuitously) on what a rational-animal *is, qua* rational-animal. That is to say, rationality is reified to serve Kant’s aims, but there is good reason to doubt. How rationality by-itsel could possibly be twisted to ethical aims, which Kant obviously tried to do to his own satisfaction, makes sense if we assume Kant was using telic intuitions (that ethics is inexorably telic), though nevertheless, failing to come to a possibly more sensible conclusion of humans having a purposive ideal rather than an apparent phenomenon from the structure of the mind. Or in more crude terms, rational abstractions are bloodless without a ground to complete it (but Kant tries anyhow with many layers of sophistication, perhaps obfuscation). If ‘rational-animal’ *means* ‘telic animal which has
the capacity to perform rational tasks’, then we have no problem, but Kant does not say this. Either rationality is a part of the anthropology, or it is a description of a function. But Kant, because Kant places rationality fundamentally at his ethics, rather than anthropology, forces himself to use strange language. It seems plausible that he is mistaken rather than merely a poor communicator. He is not an instrumentalist when it comes to rationality, so we have a problem. The will be elaborated in a short time. Though it is true the some maintain Kant is an instrumentalist too, I will maintain the contrary, as it requires far too much ‘scholarship’ to make a case for his instrumentalism.

Sidgwick also says something similarly strange as he speaks about ethicists, attempting to obtain “the self-evident principle that the good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view (if I may say so) of the Universe.” Sidgwick says something similarly strange as he speaks about ethicists, attempting to obtain “the self-evident principle that the good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view (if I may say so) of the Universe.”26 Telic intuitions, and ‘consulting conscience’ may seem strange to some, but certainly no stranger than consulting the universe or an impersonal structure applicable ‘to all rational beings’.

4.1.3 Further Reasons to Doubt Kant’s Notion of Rationality

An additional reason to doubt Kant’s idea of rationality can be framed by referring to Hume. Hume thinks, as with Schopenhauer (and obviously myself), rationality is inexorably instrumental.27 Very briefly, if Hume is right about rationality, then Kant is wrong, and dauntingly many implications arise from this, as Kant’s foundations are shaky because his concept of rationality is placed fundamentally in his work. “Instrumentalism” in the philosophy of practical reason is the theory of motivation and it represents the doctrine that a belief cannot

27 “Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.” Treatise concerning Human Nature (Bk.II, Part III, Sec. III, p. 415)
motivate any action without the help of a separate unmotivated desire.\textsuperscript{28} Or more simply, reason never motivates, only our desires push us onward through life. If moral motivation truly is a type of motivation, and reason fails to have motivational force, there is then a problem with thinking that morality \textit{qua} rationality motivates.

4.1.4 Kantian Deontology Leads also to Absurd Conclusions

If we suppose that the field of ethical philosophy is to guide its adherents to be able to know what is right and wrong, and by obedience to this knowledge make moral decisions, it certainly \textit{appears} to lead us to immoral acts. I am thinking of being duty-bound to tell the truth in light of giving up an innocent person’s life.\textsuperscript{29} This is a hotly contested issue and should require no great amount of effort to bring attention to it. It is true that some contemporary Kantians contend that Kant can be consistent in having a hierarchy of decisions which somehow preserve the rest of his moral doctrine, whilst \textit{still} maintaining that the duty not to lie be an isolated mistake of Kant’s—we must ask—why should it require so much scholarship and detailed argumentation?\textsuperscript{30}

I will not labor to prove that Kant leads us to absurdity, as I do not think this is really hard. I think it can be granted that lying obviously needs to be done at some times, if righteousness is to be taken seriously. The point to make now is to finally connect some lingering questions which may have been raised above. If rationality is \textit{not} sufficient to give us morality, what is? Certainly Kant was talking about something, and was not wholly wrong. Even if I staunchly oppose his moral doctrine, he still was a genius, and certainly \textit{there was something}


\textsuperscript{30} Hanna, Robert. \textit{Living with Contradictions: The Logic of Kantian Ethics in a Nonideal World}

University of Colorado.
he was seeing. I will contend three things: (1) Rationality is not sufficient for moral intuition, (2) Kant relies on at least a partial presupposition of imported ethical sentiments (a kind of Christian ethical residuum) is implicitly relied upon and (3) Kant ultimately relies on consequentialism to justify his a priori judgments.

Once again, Schopenhauer shows that Kant relies on the idea of selflessness in his concept of duty yet implicitly relies on a cloaked form in some idea of the highest good. One final excerpt from Schopenhauer will be indulged:

At its basis, however, this is nothing other than morality stemming from happiness, or eudaimonism, and, as a result, is supported by self-interest, which Kant had solemnly ejected from the front door of his system as heteronomous, and which sneaks in again at the back door of under the name highest good. Thus the single assumption of unconditional, absolute ought takes its revenge as a disguised contradiction. Otherwise the conditional ought certainly cannot be a fundamental ethical concept because everything which occurs with respect to reward or punishment necessarily is an egoist doing and as such without pure moral worth.—From all of these it is obvious that it requires a grand and more unbiased conception of ethics if one is serious about wanting to fathom the eternal significance of human action, significance which extends beyond appearance. *(ibid, 139-140)*

This in mind, from Schopenhauer, if rationality is not sufficient, but a highest good is postulated (from where, it should be asked), the last point is simply a question: How can a person ever decide if a hypothetical act is conformable to righteous duty? Always there is an appeal to the idea of certain types of consequences. *If* all rational beings did this…*If* everyone tried to bring this into being into the world…*then*…etc. Whether sitting in an armchair or not, if the
consequences, in principle, determine conformity to morality, certainly, rationality is not the
determiner, but consequences viewed under the ‘rational gaze’. No one is questioning whether or
not reasoning should be employed in ethics, but what makes a DVA right or wrong, is the issue.
If Schopenhauer is right, then Kant is a closet consequentialist, but this does not seem quite right
when Kant is read in his other works, for instance, his work on virtue. If the telic hypotheses here
presented turn out to be right, Kant is mistaking implicitly inherent and consonant telic intuitions
with a suppressed form of Christian eudaimonism, but explicitly expands as pure rationality.

Returning to the three claims before: (1) Rationality is not sufficient for moral intuition,
(2) Kant relies on at least a partial presupposition of imported ethical sentiments (a kind of
Christian ethical residuum) is implicitly relied upon and (3) Kant ultimately relies on
consequentialism to justify his a priori judgments.

Granting Schopenhauer’s points above, (1) should be obvious. We must use an
entirely different type rationality to make any sense of how Kant speaks of a non-
anthropological, yet morally-sufficient concept. As to (2), if we to take historical context
seriously, Kant was living in a specific time and place. His parents were Pietists and Kant
advocated duty for the highest good. Philosophy does not occur in a vacuum, and to think it
does is absurd. Whatever the case, whether Kant was a closet Buddhist or a Christian Pietist,
as an extension of the first point (rationality ≠ morality), we must ask what does it mean to
say ‘highest good’, and where did he get this idea?31 This seems to be the job of the ethicist to
explain. It does not appear, to me at least, Kant has sufficiently answered this question.

Aquinas talked about rationality being connected to righteousness, but Aquinas was an
essentialist about humans, and as a Christian, explicitly spoke of humans being Image-Bearers

31 Kant does make a list of what the highest good is, namely, that is consists in a world of universal, maximal virtue,
grounding universal, maximal happiness, but where does he get this?: Critique of Pure Reason. Trans. P. Guyer and
of God. Kant does not say this, yet he still thinks he is warranted to say rationality is sufficient for morality. But this must be left to the reader to decide.

As to (3), as saying that Kant is really a consequentialist is very controversial. It depends how we frame what a consequentialist harbors. If we construe that a consequentialist says that an action is right or wrong depending on whether the consequences are the best possible, then it may not appear obvious why Kant would be consequentialist. However, ‘best possible’, is what Kant means by ‘highest good’ (or something near enough), and duty is judged by this conformity. Whether or not Kant has a middle-step between the individual action of a person, and the extrapolated ‘possibility for everyone to will a similar act’—this is still a theoretical consequence. Maybe they collapse into each somewhere down the line? Either way, whether Schopenhauer is right or not, Kant leaves us with many questions.

I will conclude this sub-section with a provocative statement. Ayn Rand said this about Kant:

As to Kant’s version of morality, it was appropriate to the kind of zombies that would inhabit that kind of [Kantian] universe: it consisted of total, abject selflessness. An action is moral, said Kant, only if one has no desire to perform it, but performs it out of a sense of duty and derives no benefit from it of any sort, neither material nor spiritual; a benefit destroys the moral value of an action.

Certainly, we are by no means bound to agree with Rand here, and perhaps what she says could be refuted as nothing more than a gratuitous caricature, and that she is grossly

---

33 Even further, in the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant tries to argue for God by means of a moral argument (5:110–14, 124–46). But this seems more supportive of a Thomistic rationalism with man being the Image of God. An Image-bearer may possess free-will and rationality, but the Image-bearer is not dignified by this. Or, at least, it could be argued.
misunderstanding Kant’s actual position, but nevertheless, a relevant sentiment is captured by this excerpt. There is something displeasing in the idea of rationalized selflessness.

4.2 Select Criticisms of Utilitarianism

Two criticisms for Utilitarianism will be discussed: (i) Utilitarianism seems to be fundamentally wrong, as to where the determination of right and wrong reside and (ii) Utilitarianism may be practically wrong, as to the method by which moral decisions are actually made, and that there exist unfavorable consequences from this. I assume that Utilitarianism is built on two ideas: (P1) Consequences determine the rightness and wrongness of a decision. (P2) Happiness and suffering is fundamentally morally relevant.

These two premises will be combated to show that Utilitarianism is either not a fundamental theory of ethics, or is itself a fundamentally wrong theory of ethics.

4.2.1 Utilitarianism is Fundamentally Wrong

Arguably, human morality is comprised only of internal reasons connected to volition (Williams). Internal reasons are fundamental and primarily relevant to DVAs. If consequences are dependently relevant (secondarily relevant) insofar as a given set of consequences were contributed by a DVA, then it appears that a given DVA is primarily relevant and fundamental. Or in other words, we can discuss states-of-affairs without talking about morality. For instance, a nation can be described as being overrun by abject poverty and famine, and this by no means indicates any necessary moral connotations.

States-of-affairs (now SOAs) are not themselves volitional, and therefore not intrinsically morally relevant. That is to say, volition is indispensable to moral discussion and SOAs are only derivatively relevant, only insofar as they are connected to a DVA. Or further, any SOA that is willed to be (or brought into being) is morally relevant because DVAs are moral or immoral, but
SOAs disconnected from willing have nothing to with morality unless a further question is posed (is it consonant with telic intuitions?).

If Utilitarianism is supposed to explain the basics of moral decisions, then it appears to fail on this account. DVAs are simply more important. SOAs can be discussed without volition and still be perfectly intelligible. However, volition cannot be discussed without being subject to moral scrutiny.

The first step to arrive at this idea is recognizing that ‘goodness’ is conscientious. Utilitarianism appears to ignore or disbelieve this fact. Yet goodness is recognized and is itself an incomplete or relational concept, like ‘necessary’ and ‘conducive’. ‘Good’, simply stated, invokes further information to be made intelligible. It makes sense to say something is ‘good for this’ or ‘good for that’, like, ‘grain is good for horses’ or ‘money is good for people’. Similar to speaking of necessity, where one thing is necessary for something else, goodness, I submit, involves a specific indication of something. Like ‘food is necessary for nourishment’ or ‘oxygen is necessary for breathing’ and therefore, ‘oxygen is necessary for continued living’. This is seen also with words like ‘conducive’. We can say something is conducive for something else, like ‘smoking conduces to lung cancer’, ‘attention-to-detail is conducive to good writing’, etc.

If goodness means something specific, as it certainly appears to mean, but nevertheless is flexible as the above words were (because it can be related to different ideas), then it makes sense to think that goodness is something specific. Externally, we can see that food is good for horses, for without which, the horses would die. We can deprive something (like food) in an experiment and see what happens. The same is true for humans, regarding humans needing food; food can be demonstrated, then, to be necessary and ‘good’ (presuming that life is good35). But

35 ‘Human life’, itself, seems to be only intelligibly good under the greater design of God. As a theist, this does not bother me, and appears congruent with the transcendental nature of moral endeavors.
the reason that ‘goodness for humans’ is an irreducible simplicity, when speaking of moral goods, is because it is, at least in part, a moral intuition—it is a logically irreducible simplicity, because it is apprehended by conscience, and is *sui generis*. A further point may also be plausible, that the human apprehension of goodness, generally, refers to non-volitional rightness. This rightness would be something like fitness or consonance with a given design. ‘Good for humans’ would mean, perhaps, something like this: because of the specific nature of the organism (human, presupposing a design/anthropology) and the state the organism according to (under) the superordinate design. We do not have time for a full outline, but it seems possible to imagine that the actual state of an organism could be subordinated to the design, similar to how an ideal is compared to the actual.

Pleasure and happiness can be dissociated from goodness. Happiness may have goodness in it, or can be consonant with goodness. But there is an obvious intuition that sadism, and instances of extreme drug abuse are ‘bad’, but simultaneously, nevertheless, is in some way pleasurable, yet failing to qualify as good. This point will not be labored, for I think it is obvious to any fully healthy person.

It is a simple point, that goodness, like ‘necessary’, or ‘conducive’, is an idea which lacks desired content; that is, goodness is relational, referring to further conscientious content *i.e.* is eudaimonistic and/or normative. This is the *pons asinorum* of the present sub-section of ethical discussion. Sadism is wrong and it is not wrong because someone is being hurt, because one could easily imagine switching the victim with some kind of insentient dummy. For instance, rape is wrong, whether or not the victim is conscious or aware of the affront. Rape is *volitionally wrong*. There will be no further proof constructed of this for a specific reason: anyone who would contest this, again, I would argue, is actually deficient of a functional conscience.
In contradistinction to sadism (which lacks, or is inimical to, goodness), goodness is positively or negatively recognized (consonant/dissonant) via conscience, as an apprehension of the telos. For instance, in Huxley’s *Brave New World*, the kind of superficial feelings experienced for many of the characters in the book is dissonant with the conscientious understanding of ‘what humans should be about’ (negative). There is more to life than drug induced euphoria. But in seeing a happy marriage, or the birth of a child, or seeing someone healed from a debilitating disease or ailment—these are instances of conscientious apprehensions of goodness. Love, charity, benevolence, and romance, these are human concepts consonant with goodness. It is goodness for humans qua a ‘purposive idea of humanity’. Goodness is apprehended via conscience. Humans have a purpose, sadism is contrary to DVAs consonant with that purpose, but enjoying being charitable, generous, etc, *is* consonant.

If goodness is a separate concept from happiness and pleasure then humans can experience happiness and pleasure that is not good. If happiness and pleasure can be had without goodness (sadism), then obviously goodness is not identical with happiness and pleasure. Further work is certainly needed here, but for now, the distinct difference must be noted between happiness-pleasure and goodness.

This should be enough to raise doubts about the Utilitarian foundations because the *primarily* objective goodness of pleasure and happiness is fundamental to Utilitarianism (but even this, remember, is an appeal to conscience). If the Utilitarian is committed to the idea that pleasure and happiness (deprived of a further conscientious goodness) is both primarily an

---

36 Throughout Huxley’s *Brave New World* there exists an eerie sense of false happiness and superficiality of life. It was common practice to be addicted to a drug called Soma, which was a kind of hedonic panacea. But this, of course, is subject to an individual’s experience.

37 Pleasure may still be objectively good, on this account, but it is a complex of ‘telic good’ + ‘pleasure/happiness’. Without the necessary ingredient of the confirmation of conscience (goodness here construed), one would not be justified to call something truly good.
objective good and a determiner of moral DVAs, then it appears that either Utilitarianism is not a
fundamental ethical theory, or is a fundamentally wrong ethical theory. If desires and volitions
can be wrong without producing any ill-consequences, it appears that Utilitarianism is
problematic. Desire and volitions can be wrong without any obvious effects, and Utilitarianism
must address this.

4.2.2 States-of-affairs Cannot be Recognized as Good or Bad Without Appeal to
Conscience

If SOAs are intrinsically morally irrelevant (disconnected from volition), or is morally
relevant only insofar as the conception of the SOA is being willed (SOA + DVA = morally
relevant; SOA alone = descriptively relevant, but not morally relevant), then appeals to
consequences themselves seems very odd, or in the very least, not germane.

Evaluating complex situations of social conditions comprised of person’s feelings of
happiness/sorrow is inextricable from the conscientious apprehension of goodness (as here
characterized), and therefore is telic (provided that moral intuitions are telic intuitions).

Perhaps, Utilitarianism should be removed from the overall ethical sphere, and placed in
an isolated sub-section of SOA policies, where the discussion could be restricted to whether
certain SOAs are more or less preferable? If there is any merit to the above discussion, isolating
Utilitarianism to SOA policies (instead of ethics in general), this may still preserve the relevance
of Utilitarianism (though limited), while still taking the criticisms above seriously.

From this discussion, we can say that goodness is not happiness, and is not directly
morally relevant and further, that consequences do not in themselves determine rightness or
wrongness of any decision.

4.2.3 Personal Integrity
Bernard Williams argued that personal integrity is more important than conjectural and extrapolated ideas of consequences, when removed from reliable conscientious considerations.  

Personal integrity can be understood in different terms, but his identity view of integrity will be mentioned here. Integrity is, according to Bernard Williams, “the condition of my existence, in the sense that unless I am propelled forward by the conatus of desire, project and interest, it is unclear why I should go on at all.”

And elsewhere, Williams says this, as he argues against act-utilitarianism:

It is to alienate him in a real sense from his actions and the source of his action in his own convictions. It is to make him into a channel between the input of everyone's projects, including his own, and an output of optimific decision; but this is to neglect the extent to which his actions and his decisions have to be seen as the actions and decisions which flow from the projects and attitudes with which he is most closely identified. It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity.

Personal integrity, if we tried to complement Williams’ view with our telic hypotheses, is conscientiously and non-externally consequential (internally consequential). It is eudaimonistic, but its full content veiled. It is ‘eudaimonistically veiled’, meaning that ‘doing the right thing’ is of paramount importance, not because the human agent knows of a clear set of favorable external circumstances, or even the precise nature of her specific internal betterment, though nevertheless, to go against conscience there exists the distinct impression that wrong DVAs damages one’s self. Presumably, then, any doctrine which goes against this kind of personal integrity is immoral.

---

38 Williams: “practical deliberation [unlike epistemic deliberation] is in every case first-personal, and the first person is not derivative or naturally replaced by [the impersonal] anyone” (1985: 68)
39 Williams 1981b, p. 12
40 Williams 1973, p. 117
If all hedonistic calculi rely on conscience, and conscience is more primary than apprehended future SOAs, then personal integrity is more important than consequences.

4.2.4 Utilitarianism is Practically Wrong

If Utilitarianism encourages people to consult symptoms rather than the roots of the conscientious intuitions then attention to appearance will be encouraged rather than real moral integrity.\(^{41}\) ‘Benefic’ and ‘benevolent’ are separate concepts. The first is a reference to an SOA (benefic); the second is a moral indicative (benevolent).

If Utilitarianism teaches us to think wrong by leading us to symptoms rather than deeper truths, and this misdirection further induces adherents to being lower quality people (less happy too)\(^{42}\), we may be led to be ignorant immoral conformists rather than intelligent and moral humans.

If the above criticisms are creditable, it still seems possible to formulate a kind of ‘non-fundamental Utilitarianism’, which may conduce to better SOAs iff the adherents have an implicit concept of human goodness held in tandem with ‘happiness conditions’. Mill seems to have had this implicit concept, and this is why his writing, I submit, was not wholly ridiculous.

5 Telic Responses to Criticisms, and Suggestions to Further Direction

5.1 Telic Responses to Kantianism and Utilitarianism

---

\(^{41}\) Some might be displeased that this is a tautology. I am displeased too. But this is why some rail against Utilitarianism: Utilitarianism is fundamentally wrong and this is emphasized by means of an adequate description.\(^{42}\) Perhaps, the ‘hedonic paradox’ exists only because Utilitarianism is fundamentally wrong. "But I now thought that this end [one's happiness] was only to be attained by not making it the direct end. Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness[....] Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness along the way[....] Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so." (Mill), And also: "I should not, however, infer from this that the pursuit of pleasure is necessarily self-defeating and futile; but merely that the principle of Egoistic Hedonism, when applied with a due knowledge of the laws of human nature, is practically self-limiting; i.e., that a rational method of attaining the end at which it aims requires that we should to some extent put it out of sight and not directly aim at it." (Sidgwick)
In both criticisms of Utilitarianism and Kantian Deontology there were two problems: Fundamental problems pertaining to the grounding of the ethical system, and practical problems, pertaining to conflicts with the ethical system and to counter-intuitive results. Since this is not a proof that a human telos must necessarily exist, but simply an experiment to gain some explanatory traction with a few hypotheses, the selected problems can be, perhaps, at least partially explained using our hypothetical telic terms.

Neither Kant nor Utilitarianism explicitly discusses telos as the ground from which morality stems. Kant does discuss teleology in the second half of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, but Kant nevertheless dismisses anthropology from his moral foundations explicitly in the preface of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. If there was something uniquely human and purposive as a telos, then certainly this is anthropological. If telos is one of the aspects humans have, and other creatures do not have, then this certainly seems anthropological. As to Utilitarianism, though I think it is possible to renovate the theory, if all fundamental claims were renounced (as to the intrinsic goodness of happiness and pleasure), then I think that Utilitarianism would be quite useful. But this is asking a lot, and I do not expect it.

If we reflect back on the previous criticisms, both the foundations of the ethical theories are questioned, and both are found to be practically problematic. With Kant, a person can be imagined to ‘do his duty’ whilst clearly doing something wrong, namely, allowing an innocent to suffer at the hands of soldiers of an evil regime. We could imagine a Nazi soldier attempting to apprehend a Jew hiding in someone’s house. With Utilitarianism, a person can be imagined to

---

43 “Isn’t it utterly necessary to construct a pure moral philosophy that is completely freed from everything that may be only empirical and thus belong to anthropology? That there must be such a philosophy is self-evident from the common idea of duty and moral laws.” (Kant’s Preface in the Groundwork)

44 Self-reflection seems to be a pre-requisite to intuiting telos. If other creatures have a telos, it would not appear to be the sort relevant for ethical discussion. But this may prove interesting in combating Utilitarian formulations of speciesism. If human righteousness is purely telic (and in no direct way, related to pain/pleasure), then speciesism seems impotent, because speciesism seems to rely on the animal’s pathos to justify the animal’s moral relevance.
kill an innocent for the benefit ‘of the many’. Somewhere along the line of moral reasoning something went wrong, right? If the foundations are wrong, then we should expect problems in the practical application of the principles. This is what we find.

We must remember that if moral intuitions are telic intuitions, and ethicists (including Kant, Mill, or any other) rely on moral intuitions, regardless of their explicit professions, then all ethicists use telic intuitions. If we can imagine that Kant and the Utilitarian, though both trying to explain the human moral phenomena, they nevertheless attend to different aspects, simply because they are trying to stay true to their own theoretical commitments. For instance, speaking of theoretical salience: “Kuhn claimed that if Galileo and an Aristotelian physicist had watched the same pendulum experiment, they would not have looked at or attended to the same things. The Aristotelian’s paradigm would have required the experimenter to measure.”45 Or as Hanson put it, ‘seeing is a “theory laden” undertaking.’46

This is speaking about scientific theorizing, but I see no reason to think that these theoretical ideas do not apply to ethics as well. Referring back to section 2, there is a case to be made that right and wrong are objective features, and further, it may make sense to see moral intuitions as telic (with the rest of our discussion thus far). The problem before us though, is how moral intuitions appear to give feedback through conscience, with intuitions of consonance or dissonance with the telos and our DVAs.

In order for us to briefly summarize some possible telic insights, we can return to the hypothesis about what the telos is to us, according to this previous discussion, and follow both the Kantian example, from foundation to practice, and see what is missing from the foundation

46 Hanson, N.R., 1958, Patterns of Discovery, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
and what is missing from the practice. We can then try to do this with the Utilitarian example also.

Kant does not explicitly include purpose into his foundation of ethics but implicitly requires it in practice. ‘Rationality sans purpose’ might be a way to characterize the explicit vacuity of Kant’s foundation, free of desires and any anthropology. We encounter a practical absurdity where ‘duty’ somehow trumps the practical willing to do something in the world i.e. save the innocent from the murderer. But obedience to a bloodless and formal system requires no concern. We encounter the moral dissonance in the purpose of the agent allowing the Jew to suffer evil. So we should. Duty is, perhaps, not intrinsically good. That is to say, duty, if there is such a thing, would be an obligation to something specific. Like loyalty or respect or necessity, as discussed in section 4.2.1, these words rely on their connection to further content.

For instance, presumably we would agree that the Nazi soldier’s loyalty was not a good thing. Yet, somehow, we do want to say that loyalty is good. Similarly, duty is only a good thing, being connected to moral content, iff it is conformity to right purpose (which leads the question into telic territory).

Someone might be inclined to think that there is a ‘higher duty’ to honesty, than a person’s life. Yet choosing a personal moral high-ground, deprived of a purposeful intention (maybe a desire) seems incommensurate with a purposeful intention to save a real person’s life (the person is not an a priori concept after all). Why?

If duty is telic and means conformity to telic DVA’s, then there is no obvious reason for a kind of universalized imperative that ‘lying is wrong’. Perhaps deception with ill intent is wrong, insofar as the implied purpose of the agent is clearly dissonant with our telic apprehensions. We do not condemn lying because it is contrary to duty for rational beings qua rational beings.
Deceiving for the purposes of evil (a telic apprehension); this is wrong. Yet there seems to be no need of an *a priori* consequentialist test of right-duty (see sect. 4.1.4). A person who can tolerate herself lacking integrity, possessing the habits of having disjointed actions, words, and beliefs (presuming the person of integrity has a kind of unity)—perhaps this is the other part of the aversion to lying. This seems to be another instance of conscience being a unity as White suggested (sect. 3.4.2).

Kant is apparently trying to show what a selfless person is, someone wholly beholden to rational dictates. But selflessness seems to be a purpose-loaded term (What type of person?—selfless, purposefully concerned for others, but not one’s self.) This is the problem. We are supposed to be selfless (which is purposive or at least essentialist) and mindlessly obedient to something conformable to the categorical imperative (which is utopian ephemera rather than real). I assume here that the categorical imperative conduces to a ‘kind of world’ reliant on a kingdom of agents, further reliant on honesty. But this utopia does not exist. The innocent Jew exists. There is only the real purpose of moral concerns, but no imaginary purposes. Since Kant disregards the real fundamental purpose of telic intuitions, and instead relies on the obedient conformity to unreal purposes we arrive at a conflict. But with any care, we soon realize that I am failing to give only a negative account. Questions keep arising, where we rightly ask- Why should we save the innocent Jew? This is something to ask for further ethical inquiry. But this itself is not a conflict. I imagine that any healthy human would clearly see that lying to the Nazi soldier *is* the right thing to do. The DVA is submitted to conscience, and presumably it would be obvious. This indicates, perhaps, that lying is not intrinsically wrong, and Kant’s moral reasoning is wrong.
Unfortunately, greater specificity appears to be closed from us, due to the narrowness of this work, but a few minimal statements can be made: If Kant explicitly disregards the purposeful nature of volitions in his fundamental concept of morality (stemming as an entailment from rationality itself), then we should have a conflict in practice, because the fundamental concept is wrong. If a thought experiment of consequences is fundamentally wrong, then we should expect conflicts with moral intuition in practice. A DVA is consonant/dissonant with conscientious feedback because the telos has a particular fixed and transcendental nature.

As to Utilitarianism, we might characterize this fundamental view, as ‘goods sans volition’. In the practical exercise of this, we might be confronted by a situation where we are deciding whether or not to dole out organs of one person to many people for the ‘greater good’. But, presumably, our moral intuition contests this idea. Here, a type of perceived consequence trumps what we might call something like the ‘sanctity or dignity of a human life’. It is perhaps true that there is a moral aspect to the sanctity of human life. Perhaps, we are Image bearers of God (Gen 9:6)? But this, again, is returning to some old ideas. First, Utilitarianism has been shown to be incoherent, if it presumes that objective external goods take moral precedence over moral intuitions (see sect. 4.2.1, 4.2.2). Second, moral behavior and thought are not about strict consequences, but strict practice. If moral volitions are primary, and consequences secondary, and volitions determine modes of practice, then certainly the mode of any practice is a key aspect to moral volitions. That is to say, Aristotle was right. We need to have the right motives, at the right times, and in the right ways. ‘Right ways’ includes the method and the apprehended consequences.

47 “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.” Genesis 9:6 (NIV).
Whatever the reason is behind the respect of persons, whether it is divine ordinance or something else, it does not appear that the scope of moral volitions informed through conscience gives us any direct explanation as to what our duty is. We know that certain DVAs are clearly wrong, and it makes sense to say that we should not do those things (if we have the volitional power to stop it). In the social sphere, where we judge each other and hold each other accountable, ought seems to imply can. However, when dealing with persons individually, dealing with humans as sui generis, as persons, it seems wrong to treat them as anything else. It is not our place to decide who lives or dies, yet in some situations we must decide just that. So there must be something to these types of Utilitarian dilemmas—because if humans truly are valuable, and their experiences are valuable as a specific extension of this, we should then try to maximize the good qualities of their experience.

It might seem that I am now arguing for Utilitarianism, but this is not the case. The absurdity of Utilitarianism, and perhaps Kantianism as well, is to idealize pure moral acts, as directly contrary to a hard moral fact pointed out by Bernard Williams discussing how absurd it is to consider moral situations having only one legitimate claim on moral agents: “It is surely falsifying of moral thought to represent its logic as demanding that in a conflict… one of the conflicting oughts must be totally rejected [on the grounds that] it did not actually apply”. And as Chappell summarizes Williams’ work: “For the fact that it did actually apply is registered by all sorts of facts in our moral experience, including the very important phenomenon of ineliminable agent-regret, regret not just that something happened, but that it was me who made it happen.”

---

person. Beset by impossible demands in an unjust world, with unjust humans running around, doing unjust things, legitimate moral regrets seem inescapable.

The significance here, I think, is the fact that we are not only responsible for things possible, but even things apparently impossible. ‘We should have known’ ; ‘we should have been smarter’ ; ‘we should have been able to stop that disaster’, etc. These thoughts, I think, go hand-in-hand with agent-regret, and the problem of multiple moral burdens. This is an unpopular view because it seems hopeless. But one implication we get from telic ethics, which includes the ‘DV’ in with the DVAs, is that social-duty and personal-duty are probably quite different. One could foresee many examples where a person does his duty to his fellow-man (inter-subjective duties), whilst simultaneously fail in his own duties to be virtuous (pertaining to his motivations, desires, priorities, etc). If this is the case, we should be trying to explain why some agent-regret is justified, and why some other instances of agent-regret are unjustified. Though Williams and Chappell may not have addressed this for our present context (that I know of), this moral issue, may prove worthy of further study in light of future constructions of telic ethics.

Additionally, an indispensable part of telic apprehensions, I submit, is the distinct idea that the world is somehow unjust and unsatisfactory, and that in certain circumstances, terrible choices must be made. The heroic and saintly person (as I consider the ‘morally upright person’), is the person who habitually struggles to better conformity with the telos, and always bettering themselves and their purposes in their life. The person forced to lie to the Nazi soldier should feel bad, in the sense that there are Nazi soldiers in the first place, and also that she must lie to protect innocent people. The person forced to make a decision about doling out organs for the ‘good of the many’, should feel outraged that anybody would force them into such quandary, recognizing that it is not their place to decide these things, not because of the consequences
unrelated to volition, but because one can never make an informed decision. That is to say, doling out organs for many people at the expense of one is not about numbers, but about something that is incalculable. Perhaps humans are like books. If someone presented you with a book, and you had to evaluate its content by counting pages, you would look at him strangely. The quality of a book is not about the word-count or binder size.

We may not be able to understand exactly why humans are valuable, but certainly it is at least as unique as a book, and most of the content is not able to be seen. The idea, also, that everybody’s pain and pleasure are equally valuable—this is based on what? Why should we ever arrive at such an idea? The word ‘priceless’ is a good example of the kind of concept attached to it, where the meaning might be lost. ‘Priceless’ does not mean that something has no price, it means that the assignment of its price cannot be performed, it is incalculable. Likewise, it may be the case that human moral agents should treat people as valuable, even if there is reason to dislike them. Personal distaste should not govern our conduct. Some people are bad, but it seems that there are still appropriate modes of conduct regarding persons qua persons.

However, it is true that sometimes humans must make incredibly distasteful decisions, and sometimes we are placed in scenarios where we must make a choice of the many over the one. Heeding William’s observation about legitimate moral regret above, we may have to choose between horrible things, but these things are still horrible, regardless of a hedonic justification, or a deontological justification.

Perhaps, this means that with enough information we could make a morally right decision to dole out the organs, and perhaps it is sometimes justified to experience moral regrets even when the ‘best’ decision was enacted. This would require further work though. Volition, through conscience, involves awareness of probable results. When something is chosen, there must be a
probable apprehension of effect (what will likely result as a course of action is taken). If a person must, absolutely must choose between 1 and 5 persons to live, and there is no information given except for a number, then 5 is greater than 1. Simple. Horrible but simple. Nevertheless, getting one’s self into such a strange and terrible situation of choosing is most probably immoral, because the assumption that incalculably valuable people are equally valuable is an obvious contradiction. We should not swing axes blindly, nor should we quantize human lives—simply, such evaluations are immoral. However, contrariwise, it seems also plausible that the moral dissonance encountered by imagining the willing of doling out organs, stems only from the emphasized connection to agent-causality. Raising this possibility, perhaps it is only the unhealthy conscience which fails to see the even the omission from choice is in fact a commission. At the present time, I do not yet have the ethical principles to decide these things.

Again, we are forced to stop due to the narrowness of this work, and must quit with a few bare statements: If Utilitarianism confuses the moral priority of volitions and consequences fundamentally, then we should expect to have problems with moral conflicts in practice. This seems predictable. Connected to volitions is the emblematic character of a choice. Each DVA is a symbol of the agent. The content of a choice, being moral, means that each choice manifests one’s character. If hedonic calculi are inherently absurd (like judging the value of a book by word count), then we should expect absurd results; or if we had the information, the rightness/wrongness is still in the DVA, and certainly, nevertheless, not in the consequence. Yet, without a positive account of the telos, we cannot go much further then this. Whether or not we should dole out the organs or lie to the Nazi are dependant on the principles yet to be developed in a further work, and as such, I cannot take a positive stand. If I am going to stay true to the commitments listed in previous sections, this work is more about raising questions bent on a
specific direction, rather than providing a list of principles. The direction is thinking about humans having a telos, which may explain ethical phenomena better than morality supposedly entailed by rationality, or objective goods disjointed from volition.

5.2 Directions and Asides

5.2.1 Possible Routes and Ambitious Directions for Further Study

Passing thoughts and Summary:

Kantian Deontology may be right, in that humans have duties, but wrong about the source of the duty (section 4.1). There are some who think that Kant was an objectivist teleologist, instead of merely a projectionist, but I wonder why so much work is needed to make a case from this (cf. sect. 4.1.4, & ft. note 25).

Utilitarianism may be methodologically right in certain circumstances where numbers of persons are the only epistemically possible information (Generals in war, policy makers, etc), though nevertheless quite wrong about its fundamentals.

Virtue ethics may fit in with telic ethics, and if this is the case, many of the problems that are launched against virtue ethics are launched also against telic ethics. This is relevant, for our present purposes, as the telos does appear to be essentialist, and virtus is essentialist. The direction for further work, like criticisms commonly voiced against virtue ethics, are based on the desire to obtain ethical decision-procedures, and the codification of moral principles.50

In order to resolve the ethical dilemmas, after some work on the principles of ethics have been treated, it seems likely that the universality of moral beings should be jettisoned in favor of vocational stewardship. This is because, if I am right in thinking that moral intuitions are telic intuitions, and telic intuitions are purposively symbolic, then is would further make sense that

virtuous responsibility is informed by knowledge, training, and stewardship. This is messy though, which probably explains its lack of popularity. But it is not relativist. It is conceptually complex though. Instead of being universal for all rational beings, it would be something like conjoining a person’s vocation, their sphere of stewardship, and their DVAs in light this context. There is much to be debated on each of these issues. But this is only a preliminary inquiry into a greater ethical project.

Whatever the case, I think we are warranted in focusing on how we can attune and refine our moral faculties, rather than support any overtures into diminishing the common reliance on personal moral intuitions, as some are doing now. Moral intuitions are sometimes faulty, but this is more likely the case of atrophy, rather than irredeemable flaws. We have moral reasons, as educators and philosophers, to lead ourselves and others out of the darkness and into wise and good counsel.

Perhaps an alliance of cognitive research into conscience operating symbolically and theoretically, and existing taxonomies of vice/virtues and duties may shed light into and onto this.\textsuperscript{51} If a telic ethical theory is entertained seriously, in tandem with EI and the tradition of virtue ethics, perhaps the unsatisfactory ethics that are now popular can be replaced with a better theory, one which deals with honest tensions of legitimate duties, but not leading us into immoral absurdities.

Perhaps the good, the right, and the beautiful really are connected, just as music, mathematics, aesthetics and ethics may be connected through conscience? Perhaps a reformulation of moral intuitions is possible, something like:

Telos + conscience = moral intuition = purposive DVA.

\textsuperscript{51} Some possible directions for this might be the Cardinal Virtue/Vices (Platonic/Scholastic), Ross’s duties, Christian Scripture (Gal 5, about works of the Spirit and works of the flesh, and many other places if we become inclined to look). See sect. 6.
Perhaps there is only the telic duty to be virtuous, and that the virtuous thing to desire, will, and enact always involves a balance between an internal and external conception of consequences? But this will require much more work, if possible.
6 Notes and Addenda

Here are some places to start to begin constructing some more positive principles from a telic ethics, focusing on the symbolic aspect of applying these virtue concepts. There is no place that convincingly argues for any of these lists specifically, but all searches have to begin somewhere:

**Fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22):** 1 Love 2 Joy 3 Peace 4 Longsuffering 5 Kindness 6 Goodness 7 Faithfulness 8 Gentleness 9 Self-control

**Seven Cardinal Virtues (scholastic):**

**Four cardinal virtues:** prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.

**Three theological virtues:** faith, hope, and love or charity.

**Ross argues that there are seven right-making features of moral action**⁵²: (1) Duty of beneficence: duty to help other people (increase pleasure, improve character); (2) Duty of non-maleficence: A duty to avoid harming other people; (3) Duty of justice: A duty to ensure people get what they deserve; (4) Duty of self-improvement: (5) A duty to improve ourselves; (6) Duty of reparation: A duty to recompense someone if you have acted wrongly towards them; (7) Duty of gratitude: A duty to benefit people who have benefited us; (8) Duty of promise-keeping: A duty to act according to explicit and implicit promises, including the implicit promise to tell the truth.

---