

# *Portions of the Supporting Argument In Additional Forms*

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*Empty is the argument of the philosopher which does not relieve any human suffering.*

– Epicurus

## **Introduction**

It is often helpful to present reasoning (or “arguments”) in different forms according to the tastes of different audiences. The purpose of this note is to present some important portions of the “argument”—that is, the reasoning in support of my views regarding morality—in additional forms as well as to provide a few additional considerations.

Although this note is roughly twenty pages *in total*, individual forms of the argument that are included herein occupy much less space. For example, what I’ve called here the “foundational argument in abbreviated form” (which is not the complete argument but does communicate important parts of it) is approximately *two pages*. The “expanded argument in word-form” is *eight or nine pages*. The latter argument also refers to some brief sections in my earlier paper, “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality.”

These materials, and others on this Web site, are intended to complement, summarize (in part), and provide additional detail regarding views and supporting arguments contained in the paper, “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality”; in the book, *The Obligations Of Reason*; and in the paper, “The Nature of the Relationship Between *Is* and *Ought*.” The first paper on the site, “The Nature of Morality”, provides some discussion not found in the other materials but is primarily an earlier version of what is discussed, at least in summary, in “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality.”

Although some audiences will hopefully find the material in this note helpful, the format and style may not be suitable for other audiences. Admittedly, the material herein was not intended to be poetry. Nevertheless, I do hope it proves helpful.

I continue to work on other forms of the argument.

Although most relevant definitions (of key terms and symbols) are included herein, a more complete discussion of terms is contained in the book, *The Obligations Of Reason*.

If you have any questions, comments, or critiques, please contact me using the “CONTACT AUTHOR” page of the Web site, [www.ObligationsOfReason.com](http://www.ObligationsOfReason.com).

Thank you for your interest!

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## Foundational Argument in Abbreviated Form

### Definitions (of Symbols) for Foundational Argument in Abbreviated Form

#### Symbol   Definition

- (A) Human social-moral faculties (in a biological sense), capacities (in a biological sense), and biological enabling mechanisms. These human faculties, capacities, and mechanisms are not (or not usually) fully concentrated in individual dedicated moral “organs”. (See current scientific descriptions of the brain and body sub-parts and *systems* involved in various social-moral dynamics.)
- (B) Evolution.
- (C) Reproduction and the passing of genes successfully from one generation to the next, in a way that the receiving generation may also be successful at creating a “next generation”, and so on.
- (D) Death.
- (E) Exist, or existence.
- (F) Fairness, or acting fairly.
- (G) [Not used.]
- (H) Happiness, or pursuing happiness.
- (I) Peace, or acting peacefully.
- (J) Justice, or acting justly.

(K) [Not used.]

(L) Love, or loving.

(M) Human social-moral behavioral dynamics, and human morality.

### Foundational Argument in Abbreviated Form

**If** (A) is a result (or product) of (B); *and*

**If** (B) is a process that effectively occurs and continues by way of (C), or “by virtue of” (C), in order to “effectively” serve the “end” (C) (although (B) is *not* conscious or purposeful, of course); *and*

**If** (A) does not and cannot continue over substantial periods of time unless (C) continues over the same substantial periods of time; *and*

**If** (D) marks the cessation of the active biological, emotional, mental, and social life of any given individual as far as direct observation and current science can tell; *and*

**If** (D) is the “screening-out mechanism” or “test” by which “natural selection”—which is the defining limiting mechanism in (B)—works; *and*

**If** (C) during current generations and successive generations is the only way that a future person can come to exist (E) in the distant future; *and*

**If** (D) is the cessation of (E) (that is, of an *alive* state of E) for living biological beings; *and*

**If** a person must first exist (E), in an alive state, in order to pursue happiness (H), act fairly (F), act justly (J), contribute to peace (I), love (L), or act in any way; and similarly, **if** a person must exist (E), in an alive state, in order to be happy (H) or to experience fairness (F), justice (J), peace (I), love (L), and etc.—i.e., **if** (E) is a *prerequisite* for (H), (F), (J), (I), and (L), as well as for any other action or living state; *and*

**If** (E), in an alive state, is a *prerequisite* for (A) and for (M) (including moral, immoral, and other behaviors); *and*

**If** human social-moral behavioral dynamics and morality (M) arises from, depends upon, and is intimately interrelated with, (A); that is, **if** (A) is *necessary* for (M) (Note that this does not mean that (A) is “*all* that is involved in” (M), nor that other factors are not also involved in influencing (M).); *and*

(continued below)

**If** we humans have (A) and (M) *because of* their past effectiveness in contributing substantially to our continuing human survival, to (C), to our (B), and to our (E), all in the face of pressures that ultimately lead to (D) for individuals; *and*

**If** the contribution mentioned in the preceding point is (and has been) indeed a substantial one; *and*

**If** (F) and (J) are understood as being (among other things) *components of* overall (M)—i.e., as important *subsets, ingredients, and/or aspects of* (M)—rather than the other way around, i.e., rather than (M) understood as being a component or subset of (F) and/or (J); *and*

**If** (M) is the subject that has to do with questions of “ought”; *and*

**If**, relatively speaking, the contribution of (A)-plus-(M) to human survival from generation to generation (i.e., to (C), (B), and (E)) is more foundational (and necessary) than the contribution of (A)-plus-(M) is to (H), (L), or other aspects of life (e.g., **if** (H), (L), and other aspects of life can’t even exist without survival as a prerequisite and platform); . . .

**Then and therefore**, can it not be reasonably concluded that {see below}?

1. Morality is, first and foremost, “about” survival<sup>1</sup> from one generation into the next, and so on.<sup>2</sup>

Put another way, can’t we reasonably conclude—at least tentatively, until *compelling evidence to the contrary is found*—that we humans *ought* to survive as a species, or at least that we are justified in our view that we **ought to try** to survive as a species, based on all evidence available to us?<sup>2</sup>

Put yet another way, can’t we reasonably conclude that the “effective” function—i.e., the “effective *reason for being*”—of human morality itself is to facilitate the survival of humans in one generation long enough and well enough to produce “next generations” (i.e., children) who in turn succeed in surviving long enough and well enough to produce a “next generation” of their own, and so on?<sup>2</sup>

2. Survival from one human generation to the next, and so on, is more foundational and central to the “effective” function of morality than are (H), (F), (J), (I), and etc.

Notes:

1. “Survival” in the sense of genes from one generation to the next, and thus of parents-to-children, and thus (and also) of genetic/family lines, and thus of intradependent and

interdependent social groups, and thus (eventually, in aggregate) of the human species. For further clarity and explanation, see the book, and see Dawkins and other writers.

2. Consider also the following statements that are consistent with the above conclusions and that may serve to clarify them: The death of the entire human species (i.e., the complete cessation of sustainable human survival) would bring to an end (A), (C), and human morality itself (M). Such situation would also end all human (F), (H), (I), (J), and (L). Similarly, global conditions that significantly *jeopardize* sustainable human survival also jeopardize the very “purpose” of morality itself. Thus, to the degree that humans actively bring about those conditions, or knowingly and passively allow them to occur, or even negligently allow them to occur, then to that degree, we are behaving *contrary* to the “effective” function of morality and, thus, acting immorally in various (and very real) senses.

### Comments

The “*if*” premises listed above can be categorized roughly into four categories (very loosely stated, and not meant to exclude other considerations): that morality is, foundationally, a product of evolution and effectively serves the same “end” served by evolution; that human morality can’t exist without the continuation of human life, i.e., continuing human existence; that existence (and thus continuing existence) is what nature “acknowledges” and “rewards”, i.e., is the most foundational “end”, as far as science can tell; and that existence is a prerequisite and foundation for happiness, justice, peace, and other qualities and actions with moral relevance.

The relationships represented in the “*if*” premises, and among the premises and the conclusions, can be represented in many ways, using different words. Indeed, some of the same relationships can be put in terms of, or augmented by, other related relationships. In a mathematical sense (i.e., as an analogy), the relevant relationships (those shown, and other related relationships) could be put into a set of “N” relationships with “N” unknowns, sufficient to solve for the “N” unknowns. (If we think about it, this shouldn’t surprise us.) I would welcome anyone who wants to help clarify, reformat, formalize, or bolster the argument in these or other forms.

One of the best ways to see the relationships and how they lead to the conclusions is via a *diagram*, with arrows showing relationships, prerequisites, requirements, and so forth.

### Further Comments

***Also***, is it not possible that {see below}?

1. Happiness is a state/feeling, and the human *quest* for happiness is a *motivating mechanism*. Both play vital roles in the processes described above. Nevertheless, neither happiness, nor the quest for happiness, hold the foundational and central role in morality that is held by survival as stated in conclusion (1) above. (This conclusion is explained in the book.)

2. Justice, peace, and fairness are very important (and practical) *means* by which the above-mentioned “ends” are forwarded. They are very important components and dynamics of morality. They are *subsidiary* ends. And, they can also be considered states, of course.
3. None of the foregoing denies the important relevance of happiness in human life and in a wide range of moral considerations. In fact, actions that facilitate the “cake” of human survival can also move beyond that, ideally, to add to the “icing” of happiness on top of the cake. Other actions may not substantially influence the cake of survival one way or another, but may help (and be very moral and beneficial) by increasing the icing. That said, actions that add to the icing for some, while significantly *undermining* the cake for others, usually run counter to the “effective” function of morality unless, perhaps, the tradeoff is highly indirect and dilute and/or the actions were taken without knowledge of the likely harm. (Happiness is discussed in the book, in particular in chapter 4, “Can We Do Better?”)

**Also**, if one argues that the logic provided above (pages 2-4) does *not* allow us to reasonably conclude (1) and (2) in the first set of conclusions above (pages 3-4), yet if the premises in the “*if*” statements are all reasonably accurate, what are the implications of such stance for the following questions?

1. Can we not still conclude that, *relative to each other*, ongoing survival plays (and should play) a more foundational/central role in moral considerations than (H), (F), (J), (I), or (L)? (This statement is *not* meant to diminish the importance of any of these elements. Of course, these elements, along with survival, are not opposites or mutually exclusive. They are *complementary* in most ways, and each plays an important role in facilitating the overall “end.”)
2. If so—i.e., if (1) in this section—, what are the substantial differences between the conclusion stated in (1) in this section and the conclusion (1) stated in the first set of conclusions above (pages 3-4)?
3. If not (1) in this section, can a convincing argument be forwarded that demonstrates that (H), (F), (J), (I), or/and (L) are the most foundational “ends” of moral behavior and are the measure(s) by which moral behavior should ultimately be measured? How does such an argument address the premises in the “*if*” statements, earlier, or at least all of them that are deemed valid?
4. If the conclusions in the first section (pages 3-4) are invalid, and if none of (H), (F), (J), (I), or (L) can be shown to be the most central “end” of moral behavior or the measure by which moral behavior should ultimately be measured, then what does that say in terms of the “effective” function, or “point”, of morality? What does it say in terms of the question of whether “morality” even exists? If it exists,

- why* does it exist? If “why” in the preceding question implies (to some audiences) awareness or conscious purpose, then we should rephrase the question and ask: If it (morality) exists, what is its “effective” function and where did it come from?
5. If the conclusions in the first section are invalid, and if none of (H), (F), (J), (I), or (L) can be shown to be the most central “end” of moral behavior or the measure by which moral behavior should ultimately be measured, does that lead to (or suggest) the conclusion that “morality” is *solely* a construct of the human mind-*imagination*, that the human mind is *independent* of the human brain-body, *and* that morality is nothing more than an “incompletely theorized agreement” among humans that serves no purpose, or no purpose other than to help those people “get along”? And, if the statements in this point (5) are true, and if the argument is forwarded that the effective role or purpose of this “disembodied” morality is to help people “get along”, what is *meant* by “get along”, and what is the implicit *goal* of “getting along”—either to the proponent of the argument or to people themselves?
  6. If the situation is as stated at the beginning of (4) and (5), does that mean that morality *doesn't really exist* (other than in disembodied human imaginations and in voluntary agreements among individuals in a group) *unless* it has been (or is) set forth by a conscious entity with authority over the universe, i.e., by a god?
  7. If none of the conclusions mentioned herein—including those I propose as well as those alternatives mentioned in this section regarding (H), (F), (J), (I), or (L)—are valid, does that mean that questions of morality are forever *unanswerable*, or at least unanswerable in the long foreseeable future? What types of findings and premises would have to *change* in order for us to resolve matters with some reasonable degree of tentative confidence? Would scientists have to actually discover compelling *evidence* that life continues after biological death? Would logicians or philosophers have to provide convincing *logic* that life continues after biological death? Would scientists and/or philosophers have to discover that a person can indeed be happy (H) without first being *alive*? Or, would we have to someday discover that the human mind is indeed, after all, entirely independent of the biological brain-body? Put another way, if the conclusions (1) and (2) suggested in the first section (pages 3-4) are deemed to be invalid, it is hard (for me anyhow) to imagine what set of changes to the premises in the “*if*” statements might be necessary to lead us eventually to *any* substantial conclusions about morality other than null sets or voluntary agreements that are valid by virtue of agreement alone.

## Ancillary Comments Regarding the Foundational Argument in Abbreviated Form

Given the types of premises and reasoning included in the “foundational argument in abbreviated form”, and given the “nature” of the phenomena we are addressing, I offer a few comments about the way I see these types of situations as they relate to the question of logical “proofs.” I’m sure that none of the following in this subsection is new. I include it merely to accompany the earlier section, for clarity’s sake, in case questions arise that have to do with the “nature” of the reasoning/logic provided.

The context here involves reasoning, logic, and “proofs” associated with phenomena in the physical universe (though nothing in this particular realm of understanding is proven with 100% finality).

Consider the following five assertions and the broader type to which they belong:

1.  $e=mc^2$
2.  $F=ma$
3.  $x=at^2 + v_0t + x_0$
4. “People must have a source of oxygen in order to remain alive.”
5. “The process of evolution involves natural selection acting upon variation.”

The symbols and key words in these statements are *not independent* of the natural items or phenomena—and the relationships among those—that they are meant to represent. Put more accurately, if one expects the relationships to have any meaning, or if one wants to assess their validity or accuracy, then one mustn’t consider the symbols and statements *independent* of the natural items or phenomena they are meant to represent. For example, one can’t designate “e”, “m”, and “c” to represent anything whatsoever (for example, e=goat and c=cola) and still expect the statement “ $e=mc^2$ ” to be true or accurate in describing the relationships among the items.

Also, I think it’s correct to say that one probably cannot prove or disprove the correctness of the conclusions listed in the first section (pages 3-4), in light of the “*if*” statements, nor evaluate the premise of each “*if*” statement for validity, in a *generic* sense, i.e., *without reference* to the natural item or natural phenomenon that each symbol or word is meant to represent. Actually, isn’t it even more accurate to say?: (1) One can’t necessarily prove the correctness of the conclusions, given the “*if*” statements, in a *generic* sense, without reference to the natural phenomena; and (2) One certainly (except in specific instances of internal contradiction) cannot *disprove* the correctness of the conclusions, given the “*if*” statements, in a *generic* sense.

Furthermore, in the case of a statement such as “it is human nature to feel pain when one’s fingers are burned”, such a statement is not proven by ten affirmative examples (of specific individuals who *do* feel pain when their fingers are burned), nor is it disproved by finding even 100 contradicting examples (i.e., of specific individuals who *do not* feel



pain, or who do not claim to feel pain, when their fingers are burned). For example, some people don't even have fingers, unfortunately. Others do not have healthy nerves (of the type that would sense burning) in their fingers. Still others have more general neurological disorders that disable feelings of pain. And, of course, some people might claim to feel no pain even though they really do. This is not to say, of course, that any claim about "human nature", "happiness", etc. is incorrect by definition or is doomed to be incorrect. It only means that such claims should be communicated clearly; that they should be ultimately understood in the way they were intended; that they must be evaluated carefully; and that they must be evaluated in the context that, for many claims that relate to matters of life, biology, and human psychology (such as those used in the examples in this paragraph), there will often be exceptions. As long as those apparent exceptions can be *understood* and credibly *explained* in light of the proposed theory, they do not necessarily serve as contradictions to, or disproof of, the theory.

## Expanded Argument in Word-Form

**(See short definitions on pages 17-19 of this note and more complete definitions on pages 40-46 of the book.)**

The following "expanded argument in word-form" is a slightly re-sequenced and (in some ways) clarified version of the argument outlined in my earlier paper, "A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality." That said, in some areas, the following argument *refers* readers to discussions in that paper in order to avoid (where possible) redundancy between the two. So, readers may find it helpful to have the earlier paper easily accessible (i.e., printed from the PDF file on this site) when reviewing the following argument. Readers who want a full grasp of the entire argument, as well as of important related points, and of the Natural Moral System itself, should read all materials on the site as well as the book, *The Obligations Of Reason: Exploring the existence, nature, dynamics and implications of the Natural Moral System*.

### Expanded Argument in Word-Form

1. Humans are products of evolutionary development (EVO).
2. Basic human social-moral faculties (in a biological sense), capacities (in a biological sense), and biological enabling mechanisms (SMFs) are products and byproducts of EVO.
3. We have them (SMFs) today *because* they helped our pre-human and/or human ancestors survive long enough and well enough to produce "next generations" (i.e., children) who in turn succeeded in surviving long enough and well enough

to produce a “next generation” of their own, and so on. Their (our SMFs’) “reason for being” in this sense is no different from that of our human bipedalism, hearts, ears, and five-fingered hands, all of which have helped us “get by” and sufficiently “flourish” in the face of natural selection (and various selective pressures) during our long and perhaps continuing period of evolutionary development. Put another way, human SMFs are part of modern humans as a result of their past effectiveness in helping humans survive and reproduce in these ways.

4. Human SMFs, human morality itself, and the social dynamics of other social species, *would not even exist* if not for human survival (or, in their cases, the survival of those other species). For example, if humans don’t exist two thousand years from now—i.e., if we don’t survive to that point—then human SMFs will not exist, human morality will not exist, and there will be no humans to even consider the subject. In this very real sense, survival is a *prerequisite* for the existence and consideration of morality itself.
5. Existence is the most basic foundational state (or quality) and is the state that nature “acknowledges” and “rewards.” (See point 2 in “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality” and pages 54-62 in the book.) For living biological beings, at any given instant, *existence is life*, and *vice versa*. For a specific living individual, to continue to exist is to *survive*. And, for genetic lines, family lines, and “species”, continuing existence (survival) through time requires (for example, in the case of humans) that enough individuals survive long enough and well enough to produce “next generations” (children) who in turn succeed in surviving long enough and well enough to produce a “next generation” of their own, and so on.
6. Furthermore, as far as science currently understands, and as far as verifiable and repeatable evidence suggests, the biological life of any individual ends with death. From a scientific standpoint, life is the most basic foundational “end” and is the *prerequisite* for other aspects and qualities of life as well as the *platform* upon which they may come about. Put another way, one must be alive (first and foremost) in order for one to be happy or unhappy; in order for one to enjoy or contribute to peace, justice, fairness, or their opposites; in order for one to love; and in order for one to reproduce. Again, without human survival (e.g., two thousand years from now), human happiness, peace, justice, fairness, love, and morality are moot points. These other qualities, dynamics, and enjoyments are *enabled by survival* and disabled (as far as science understands) by death.
7. Given points 1 through 6 (as well as related points not mentioned here), it is reasonable to conclude that morality is, first and foremost, “about” survival from one generation into the next, and so on, in the sense discussed earlier. This is *not* to say that morality is *only* about “brute survival”, that it supports or encourages reckless and risky means of pursuing the survival of some individuals or groups at

the expense of others, or that it excludes means and enjoyments such as happiness, peace, justice, and etc.

Put another way, *if* our SMFs are products of EVO; *and if* we have them *because* they helped our ancestors survive well enough to produce “next generations” (i.e., children) who in turn were able to survive well enough to produce a “next generation” of their own, and so forth; *and if* their (our SMFs’) very ability to help humans do so (relative to not having them) is the reason they exist today; *and if* human SMFs and human morality itself would not exist if not for human survival; *and if* existence is the most basic foundational state (as far as science can tell us) and is the prerequisite and platform for other qualities; *and if* the most basic “end” of life is the continuance of life (as far as science can tell us); *and if* a person (current or future) can’t be moral or immoral unless she/he is alive; *then* it follows that we can reasonably conclude—at least tentatively, until compelling evidence to the contrary is found—that we are justified in our quest to achieve species survival—ideally in a sustainable way. Similarly, we can reasonably conclude that morality is most foundationally “about” survival from one generation to the next, and so on, as described above.

Put yet another way, *if* the “effective” function—the “effective reason-for-being”—of our human SMFs is to help us survive from one generation to the next; *and if* survival from one generation to the next is the most foundational “end” as far as current scientific understanding can tell us; *and if* our SMFs (and human morality itself) wouldn’t even exist were it not for our own existence; *then* the above-mentioned conclusions reasonably follow.

8. Given this understanding, and given our self-aware, science-informed understanding of our human heritage and evolved human abilities, it is reasonable and justifiable to refine the above statement (from point 7) along the following lines:
  - a. Given that humans have the evolved ability to understand the concept of *time* (albeit imperfectly) and to “plan ahead” to a degree (albeit imperfectly), it is reasonable and justifiable, in light of the earlier discussion, to *not* be satisfied from a moral standpoint with the mere continuation of humanity into a single “next generation.” Rather than understanding morality as a vitally important ability and dynamic to help us survive into *one* “next generation”, or *two*, or *three*, or *ten*, or even a *hundred*, we should understand the “effective” function of morality as being to help humanity achieve continuing and *sustainable* survival. There should be *no excuses* (from the standpoint of moral understanding anyhow) for behaviors that undermine sustainable survival or place it at significant risk.
  - b. Given that, as far as science tells us, we are all members of one human family (i.e., all descendants of the same small group of early humans who

lived in Africa not all that long ago); *and* given that we are an interdependent social species; *and* given that we can reasonably and justifiably conclude that all humans are “equal” in some very important senses (based on numerous arguments, too many and varied to repeat here), or at a minimum we can at least *stipulate* to that conclusion; *therefore*, it is reasonable and justifiable to clarify (or refine) our statement about morality to ensure that the sustainable survival of the human species is sought (and hopefully achieved) in ways that understand all humans to be *equals* in these senses. Moreover, this conclusion is *not solely* based on intellectual discussions, philosophical logic, or ideals regarding human equality: It is also based on the interdependent nature of our species, our situation, and on basic practicality.

- c. Given that we have the evolved abilities (albeit imperfect) *and* the relatively recent scientific understanding (albeit imprecise) to see ourselves, our situation, and our well-being as being highly interdependent with the survival of biological diversity and the condition of the planet we call home, it is reasonable and justifiable to conclude that, in order to achieve the sustainable survival of the human species, we must also achieve (to a safe and healthy degree) the sustainable survival of *biological diversity* and the *sustainable health of planet Earth*. Put another way, we must (and *should*) include other species, biological diversity, and Earth’s health and sustainability in our overall understanding of morality and in the overall moral equation. Given that we have obtained this (aforementioned) degree of understanding regarding our interdependence with other species and our dependence on Earth’s health, and given the understanding of morality discussed herein, we cannot now *choose* to become *ignorant* regarding these facts—at least *not morally*. To put this in terms sometimes used in legal and political discourse, any case for “plausible deniability” regarding the moral need to respect biological diversity and environmental health is no longer compelling. (There are also other very good reasons to respect biological diversity, other species in total, and *members* of other species, which need not be repeated here.)
- d. Therefore, given “a”, “b”, and “c”, it is reasonable and justifiable to clarify and refine the earlier statement (from point 7) as follows: Morality is ultimately “about” the sustainable and healthy survival of the human species, along with healthy and plentiful biological diversity, along with the sustainable health of our home, planet Earth, all accomplished in a way that respects human equality and embraces a living, precious, and somewhat fragile planet. *Or something like that.*

### 9. Regarding The “Nature” of the Relationship Between *Is* and *Ought*

The “nature” of the relationship between *is* and *ought* is implicit in the above points and conclusions and can be derived from them. It is described in my earlier paper, “The Nature of the Relationship Between *Is* and *Ought*”, and also briefly discussed in the book. Briefly, and in oversimplified form, important elements of the argument involve the following factors:

- a. *Is* and *ought* live in the same universe. Indeed, the word and concept “ought” is a part of what *is*, in the broad sense of the latter term. Put another way, humans are part of the universe, not separate from it.
- b. Because, given the above arguments and related considerations, it is reasonable and justifiable for us to conclude that we *ought* to survive as a species—or, at least, that we are justified in concluding that we *ought* to *try* to survive as a species—we can (and should) use this basic conclusion as a key point in the derivation of some other *oughts* from what *is*. In a *meta* sense, this conclusion is the *link* between the two—that is, the link between *is* and *ought* at the most basic level.
- c. Similarly, in another version of point “b”, because morality is ultimately “about” the sustainable and healthy survival of the human species from generation to generation (along with other elements in the elongated statement included in point “8d”), the same conclusion (as in “b”) applies. Put one more way, because the “effective” function of morality is to facilitate survival in this sense, the same conclusion (as in “b”) about the *is-ought* link follows.

### 10. Regarding Happiness, Fairness, Justice, and Other Practical Things

Happiness, fairness, justice, and other practical things are either mechanisms (means), enjoyments, *subsidiary* ends, and/or ancillary outcomes. *Life* is their *prerequisite* and *platform*. They are all intimately related to morality—inseparable from it, and to some degree, aspects of it. And they are, of course, vitally important. However, they are not the sources of morality, the ultimate “effective” function of morality, or the most foundational “end” of morality. They are not the ultimate arbiters of morality. They are not the most foundational or ultimate means by which morality should be measured.

- a. Happiness plays several roles in life. Among them, happiness is a potential “icing on the cake” of life. It helps us enjoy and tolerate life. And, the *quest* for happiness is a vital motivating mechanism, although a very imprecise one. Indeed, the *quest* for happiness motivates us, on average and very imprecisely, to do the things necessary for the continuance of life (i.e., survival from generation to generation), while the *feeling* of happiness serves as icing on the cake of life as we proceed

through that process. That said, it can be demonstrated (I believe) that happiness does *not* play the foundational role that survival plays with respect to morality. This can be readily demonstrated using the above arguments, other logic contained in the book, a multitude of moral cases, examples from literature and entertainment, and perhaps by other means.

- b. Fairness and justice are means and dynamics, and important subsidiary ends, to achieve the broader moral end (described above) and to help us enjoy (or at least tolerate) the process of life by contributing in important but imprecise ways to happiness, stability, and other outcomes.
- c. Peace, like fairness and justice, is also an important means and subsidiary end.
- d. “Getting Along” is also an important means and subsidiary end.

At this somewhat arbitrary point in the argument, I’ll shift from reasoning and conclusions that are foundational (to this understanding of morality) to those that are not quite as foundational but are, nevertheless, important and descriptive. That said, there is no clear line of delineation in the natural universe regarding these various arguments and factors. To some degree, each is related to all else.

Also, in the following points, I will occasionally refer readers to specific discussions in “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality.”

#### 11. Regarding Interdependence and the “Nature” of Morality

Please refer to point 12 in “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality”.

#### 12. Regarding Universals and Variations

Please refer to point 6 in “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality”.

#### 13. Regarding “Living the ‘Sandwich’”, the “Nature” of Morality, and Moral Dynamics

Points 1 through 10—and most foundationally, points 1 through 7—establish a basic platform for understanding morality, although aspects of all points herein (1 through 17) are intimately interrelated, and boundaries between them are somewhat artificial. In particular, point 16—“Regarding the Influence of Historic Conditions and Culture”—acknowledges the important and influential role of historic conditions and culture on moral views, many moral particulars, and especially specific human behaviors.

Please refer to point 5 in “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality” for a discussion of what I mean by “living the ‘sandwich’” and why this may be a helpful way (at least to me) of *picturing* how many of the points 1-7 come together to define a conceptual “space” within which moral dynamics occur and within which questions of morality may be considered.

Please refer to the book itself for a description of many of the key human social-moral dynamics (in particular, chapter 2, “Exploring and Understanding the Natural Moral System”).

#### 14. Regarding Semantics

- a. There is a semantic-logical linkage between a key criterion often associated, either explicitly or implicitly, with human concepts of “morality” and “moral system”, and points 5 and 6 herein, from a scientific standpoint. This linkage may be very important to some people and much less important to others. Please refer to pages 48-62 in chapter 1 of the book.
- b. Regarding the word “morality”: Please refer to point 9 in the paper “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality”.

#### 15. Regarding The Natural Moral System

- a. The words “natural” and “moral”, as used herein, are defined elsewhere and in the book.
- b. Regarding the word “system”: There are many different types of systems, of course, in the natural world and described by the various sciences (physical sciences, life sciences, etc.). In the sciences, the word “system” is often used to refer to fairly complex, holistic, integrated systems (of action and interaction) of nature and/or life, e.g., *ecosystem*, *cardiovascular system*, etc. On the other hand, the phrase “moral system” is often, traditionally, used to refer to *specific sets of written rules*, written or shared principles, or norms—sometimes (though not always) inclusive of their broader (but still group-specific) ideological or philosophical contexts. For example, we have the Judeo-Christian moral system, the Buddhist moral system, and many others. This traditional but somewhat narrow meaning of the phrase “moral system” is helpful and valid for many purposes, of course, but does not capture a broad, deep, science-informed view of morality and moral dynamics. This is *not* the sense intended by my use of the word “system” in the term “Natural Moral System.” Instead, the word “system” in this usage (i.e., in Natural Moral System) is intended to carry the full meaning and range of the word “system” as used in other scientific contexts, as described in the first several sentences of this point “b”.

- c. Many people correctly point out that *specific* moral rules and norms often display a great deal of variety—and are often *not* identical—across human cultures. That much is clearly accurate. Others argue that “morality” doesn’t even exist, and others argue that it is completely (100%) or predominantly (80%-plus?) a product of human imagination, conscious reasoning, or culture. None of these arguments disprove the existence of universal human social-moral *dynamics*, underlying human social-moral faculties (SMFs), their origins, or their “reason for being.” The first observation simply demonstrates that the *specific written rules* and *cultural norms* are variable (to some degree) across cultures.

If the “branching-tree model” that applies biologically to evolution in general, is also applied to human biological evolution, to biological-social evolution, and to social “evolution” in the last 300,000 years; and if “mind” and “body” are not split in two and seen as completely distinct entities; then the *difference* between (and *relationships* among) specific written rules and the universal moral SMFs and dynamics that give rise to them, should be understandable. Indeed, scientists, in a wide variety of disciplines, have been exploring and trying to clarify the *universals* increasingly in recent decades.

- d. Within this context, the Natural Moral System does *not* represent a claim that there exists a *list* of a specific number of *precise moral rules*, or precise principles of moral logic, that are universal across *all cultures and all humans*. (Consider: Not all people have the same color skin. Not all people enjoy eyesight. Not all people have two hands. Not all people have the same level of human empathy, and some people have very little, if any—e.g., consider those with extreme cases of Antisocial Personality Disorder.) Thus, the Natural Moral System involves the “universal” human SMFs, the related “universal” social-moral dynamics, and etc. (i.e., their origins, effective function, etc.) that are common (albeit in varying degrees) to all reasonably healthy and reasonably “normal” humans who do not have a specific malady that would understandably disable them (i.e., the SMFs or basic dynamics).
- e. Please see the book for a description of the “nature” of the Natural Moral System and of key human social-moral dynamics. Reading the entire book will provide the most complete understanding. Chapter 2 in particular, “Exploring and Understanding the Natural Moral System” (pages 83-216), describes many human social-moral dynamics. Aside from particular dynamics, the “nature” of the system is discussed on pages 135-139, continuing on pages 166-175.



## 16. Regarding the Influence of Historic Conditions and Culture

Please see points 15b, 15c, and 15d, above, as well as point 13 in “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality”, for relevant discussion. The views herein are consistent with the fact that historic conditions and cultural pressures *do* play important roles in shaping the specific social-moral norms existing in individual cultures at specific points in time as well as influencing (to a degree) social-moral understanding and norms across cultures. That said, culture itself is a *reflection* of human nature (often reflecting or encouraging some facets of it more than others, and often reflecting a bent/imprecise version of it to a degree) and is *enabled by* our evolved human abilities and biological mechanisms. Realizing that the term “human nature” is a somewhat ambiguous shorthand term, nevertheless, we can note that without “human nature”, there would be no human culture. Similarly, without “hive bee nature”, there would be no hive bee culture. And so on.

## 17. Regarding the Difference Between Moral Understanding and Behavior

There is, of course, a difference between understanding morality and behaving morally. (This difference applies to any moral system.) Indeed, this difference reflects a key aspect of human nature and is an important element in any understanding of human morality and of the Natural Moral System. It is loosely represented by a quote from the movie *The Matrix*: “There is a difference between knowing the path and walking the path.”

## Short Definitions for Expanded Argument

Below are some short definitions. For additional definition and commentary regarding many of these terms, and others, please also see the book, *The Obligations Of Reason*, pages 40-46.

**SMF**—Human social-moral faculties and capacities (in a biological sense) and biological enabling mechanisms. As in (A) in the abbreviated argument.

**EVO**—Evolution. As in (B) in the abbreviated argument. EVO occurs via natural selection (and perhaps other ancillary forms of selection, all within an overall selective umbrella) acting upon variation (genetic variation and genetic-environmental-developmental variation).

**SMD**—Human social-moral dynamics.

**EX**—Existence.

**“Morality” (in quotes)**—Usually meaning “morality”, the word, or sometimes meaning “morality” as possibly understood by some traditional views.

**Moral System**—When used to describe or refer to the Natural Moral System, see below. When used to refer to a traditional understanding of “moral system”, it refers to those traditional systems, or to traditional/common views of what *defines* such a system. Often, traditional moral systems include a specific number of *specific written rules*, and the relationships between the rules are often not made clear. See also definitions in the book.

**NMS (Natural Moral System)**—Explained in the text itself. Use of the word “system” here is akin to scientific uses of the word. “System” here does *not* mean a specific number of specific written rules surrounded by highly-related, conscious, culture-specific norms. Exploration and description of the NMS and its *dynamics* are included in the book. See also definitions in the book.

**Nature**—*Everything* that exists in the “physical” universe, including its matter, mechanisms, emergent properties, and expressions, and also including *people*. If I *imagine* that Santa Clause lives on Mars, that imagined thing is a real *imagination*, in my brain-mind, and my brain-mind is real, of course, but there is no *real* Santa Clause who lives on the *real* planet Mars. Thus, a “Santa Clause living on Mars” is not real and is *not* part of nature. My imagination, and the fact that it imagines things, are real and are part of nature. Please also see the definition in the book.

**“Nature” (in quotes)**—Usually, “nature” (when in quotes), as sometimes used herein, refers to the word “nature” in the sense of the qualities and characteristics of something. For example, the “nature” of a cat is to meow. The “nature” of water involves fluidity. Or, sometimes, I may use this term to refer to “nature” in its limited sense, e.g., green trees, clean streams, and things *not* man-made.

**Natural**—As in definitions “1” and “2” in *The American Heritage College Dictionary*: “1. Present in or produced by nature. 2. Of, relating to, or concerning nature.”

I don’t mean this term in the sense of “automatic” or “the normal course.”

The *American Heritage Dictionary* gives the following definitions of the word “nature”, as I usually use the term (without the quotes): “1. The material world and its phenomena. 2. The forces and processes that produce and control all the phenomena of the material world.” See above.

**Science**—A way of learning, thinking, and “knowing” involving observation, experiment, evidence, verifiability and repeatability, and holding knowledge in various degrees of confidence and as being “tentative”, i.e., willing to replace old understanding with new understanding when the new understanding better corresponds to available evidence.

**Relevant Scope**—The scope within which the above arguments and conclusions are relevant and valid. See “A Framework and Paradigm Of Morality” and the book.

**A note on “survival”**—When I talk about “survival” and the mechanisms of “survival” from one generation to the next, I refer to a concept of “survival” and reproduction—and movement from one generation to the next—that works according to the latest scientific understanding, i.e., Dawkins and refinements of Dawkins (building upon Darwin and many others, of course), including the dynamics involved in gene-environment interaction and “Evo-Devo”, etc. Although the *precise* dynamics of those latter interrelationships and mechanisms are vitally important to understand for many purposes, they are highly unlikely to undermine the overall theory and framework of morality discussed herein, unless the final understanding dramatically reverses some very basic aspects of our concept of evolution itself, as well as other things.

Please see the more detailed definitions in the book.

## A Few Other Considerations and Brief Supporting Arguments

### Additional Consideration #1

People sometimes make the point that we can’t *see* “morality.” In other words, “morality” is not a concrete *visible* thing (as a *concept*) such as a hammer, a rock, or a turkey, in their view. Thus, the argument might go, morality is *beyond the reach* of the sciences to observe, study, and understand (the physical sciences? the life sciences?). Or, is the point that it therefore can’t be *influenced* by things physical?

Compare our human hands with human morality. Yes, we can *see* our hands, but we can’t *see* “morality”—not as a *concept* or *subject* anyhow. But, we *can* see the biological faculties that play any role in our social-moral abilities and dynamics. We *can* see our social-moral actions and their repercussions. And we *can* see that other people exist and that social interactions and consequences exist. We *can* also see the importance and function of social interactions in the survival mechanisms of many other social species, e.g., bees, ants, chimpanzees, bonobos, and etc. Yes, we humans have more flexibility and choice than members of those other species. However, that doesn’t mean that the most foundational “reason for being” of human SMFs and human morality *is not* our ongoing survival from one generation to the next. (Indeed, the flexibility that we have as individuals, groups, and a species to choose behaviors that undermine the “end” of ongoing human survival is ultimately limited in several ways, though probably not in others. For example, if we, as individuals, choose actions that would substantially undermine this goal for ourselves, our families, our groups, or the species, then sooner or later someone—or some group—whose ongoing survival we act to undermine will probably confront us.) And if, species-wide, we choose behavior patterns that undermine our ongoing survival, then some day we (including our SMFs and etc.) will no longer be around to even consider the topic “morality”, and our patterns of social interaction will cease to be relevant.

Consider some of the most fundamental “rights” we believe we have: The right to life, to have children, to enjoy what happiness we can, and to pursue happiness, all in ways that don’t substantially interfere with other people’s same rights. Most of the *least moral* (i.e., most immoral) actions are those that *violate* these rights in substantial ways. But consider: These rights (living, having children, etc.) are the same ingredients and activities that are reflected by the understanding provided herein. In other words, they are the same ingredients that lead to survival from one generation to the next, and so on.

### Additional Consideration #2

If the argument is made that the most foundational or “ultimate” function of morality is anything *other than* ongoing survival (in the sense discussed earlier)—for example, if one argues that the most foundational function of morality is happiness, or peace, or fairness, or etc.—then the following questions must be answered: If the most foundational function of “morality” is *not* ongoing survival, then what word(s) *do* we use to name the class or type of social choices, actions, and interactions that loosely govern our shared quest to achieve ongoing *survival* and to avoid collective death or societal destruction? If not “morality”, do we currently call this broad class simply “common sense” when referring to important social actions and interactions?

### Additional Consideration #3

What factors might explain (at least in part) the many confusions and resistances regarding the meaning of “morality”? Consider: If some people think of morality as mainly having to do with sexual matters, then depending on what side of a sexual question they stand on, this view of “morality” may cause them to see it as an unwarranted control mechanism (unjustly imposed by others) and may cause them to rebel against “morality” in a larger sense. Also, if a person sees “morality” as being mainly about sex, that leaves no other common word or concept to capture the broader and deeper notion of treating other people well in other aspects of life.

If a person believes that “morality” doesn’t exist in any “real” sense, such a belief provides license to partake in harmful behaviors and leads to the view that all moral matters are merely (and solely) matters of personal preference. *However*, when something clearly wrong and harmful occurs—especially if it happens to *us!*—, one of the strongest criticisms we can have of that thing is to call it “immoral”, and we often do so. (We also use other words that have more flexible meanings, such as “outrageous” or “terrible”, but these terms are often just strong expressions of shock or disagreement. A tasteless or even great Halloween costume can be “outrageous” and a hurricane or wine can be “terrible.”)

#### Additional Consideration #4

It's also informative (and not surprising) that traditional moral systems espouse behaviors that, directionally speaking, aim at *ongoing survival* of the groups that hold them. They also, of course, include various versions of what is often called The Golden Rule, reflecting (in similar but varying ways) the underlying human social-moral dynamic of reciprocity.

#### Additional Consideration #5

If morality is ultimately (i.e., at its foundation) about *nothing*—or if it is about *everything equally* (relativistically speaking)—what evidence and reasoning support those conclusions, and what do the conclusions *mean*? If the *ultimate* aims of morality are peace and/or justice, then we are still left to ask, peace and justice *to what end*? Would it be fine for humans to grossly overpopulate the planet and eventually starve ourselves, as long as we do so *peacefully*? Consider: If some portion of the population is responsible for unmitigated population growth, and if that growth eventually places human life in jeopardy, would it be moral for the more reproductively-self-restrained portion of the population to *break* the peace if doing so were the only path of last resort to stop the reckless growth?

If morality is primarily about peace, then what about justice? If it's primarily about justice, then what about peace? If it's mainly about personal happiness, or even collective happiness, then what about justice, species survival, or etc.? If it's about *all* of these things, *equally*, then what is the *common ingredient* and the *overarching aim*—the “effective” function—and why?