

Philosophy of Life II

The Meaning of Life

There is no true meaning of life; of course, organisms such as human beings are programmed to survive and by the means of reproduction pass on their genes, but to call this *meaningful* would be a violation against the objective mind. In fact, almost nothing is “important”. For instance, it does not matter whether a star ends its life as a supernova or a white dwarf. Certainly, the consequences of the two outcomes will be quite distinct, but those would hardly be any more significant than the fate of star. Moreover, the consequences of the consequences will differ, but we will not be able to prove any real significance here either. However, one is always able to *define* a meaning of life, which one axiomatically would consider to be meaningful, important and determining the daily life. Likely, for nearly all conscious organisms, this single meaning is to *feel good*: to avoid pain and suffering, and to experience pleasure and happiness. This insight, *the framework of life*, should apply to all conscious organisms. The *path* leading to well-being, however, is individual. The set of activities resulting in well-being differs between different persons. Although humans fill their days with quite different activities seeking well-being, they all have the very same goal: to fulfil the requirements of the framework, to feel good. When people get tired of each other, and find it hard to accept each other’s way of life, they should remember this.

To *whom* well-being is important, and *when* well-being is important, are two potentially difficult questions, though. Instantly, we realise that well-being is equally important to everyone able to experience well-being, i.e. to almost all animals (including the human being), but issues of distribution are more intricate. The statement “well-being is important” merely being a definition, we are forced to make definitions here as well – the preferable choices can hardly be deduced from more general ideas. Suppose an individual is given the choice between experiencing well-being all her life, and experiencing suffering the first quarter of it and feeling enormous happiness the rest of it: what should she choose? If we shorten the intervals and only study four days, in which the first day can be the suffering and the following three the happiness, the problem becomes somewhat more comprehensible. Assuming the suffering is small, it is likely that many people would choose the minor suffering, longing for the magnificent joy. On the other hand, if the suffering would be comparable to brutal torture, most people would probably relinquish the offer, unless the well-being is extraordinary important, e.g. if the memories of it would stay vivid for the rest of the person’s life, flooding her with delight. Even so, however, it would seem very hard to make the choice of torture. It seems tricky to define clear rules concerning the distribution of well-being, particularly as there are no simple ways of measuring it. One is hardly able to construct a scale using a single variable representing the well-being, for well-being appears to be controlled by emotions of different types. Furthermore, if we are given the choice between a situation where two people are feeling good, and a situation where one of them is suffering, whereas the other is experiencing extraordinary pleasure, we obtain a similar problem.

One of the differences ought to be that their memories are not shared; the one obtaining the suffering will not get any memory of extraordinary pleasure, and the one obtaining the extraordinary pleasure will not get any memory of the suffering. Again assuming the suffering is minor, we might choose the second option: the discomfort for the first person will barely be noticeable, whereas the second person will obtain a delightful future. Assuming the opposite, that the suffering is major and the increased well-being only minor, we would hardly ever accept the second option. Not even if a major increase in suffering comes with a major increase in well-being, we would accept it; apparently, we tend to consider (additional) suffering more bad than (additional) well-being is good. Although it may be educational to study exemplifying issues of distribution, it is probably easiest to study each real-life situation separately, and in each such situation choose the most appropriate option, that in some sense of distribution results in as high well-being and as little suffering as possible.

Sometimes one may also notice that there are two fundamentally distinct *methods* of making decisions: either one may *rationally deduce* how the goal of the framework may be achieved, or one may act *by instinct*. In many cases, these methods are both equivalent and interrelated, but sometimes they may differ significantly. Consider a man about to rape a woman: if he obeys his emotional impulses and fulfils the act, not only the woman will suffer, but the man will risk “ruining” major parts of his life in prison, as well.

Moreover, it may feel pedantic in each and every situation to consider the fundamental goal of the framework, always to keep this in mind; instead, one is allowed to introduce higher-level more human-readable *principles*, summarizing how to act in different situations. One example of such a principle is that objects are to be beautiful. At the framework level, this means that objects should be designed so that conscious individuals obtain well-being looking at these, but instead of deducing and keeping this quite awkward observation in mind during product development, one may simply rely on the principle, stating that the goal of the design is merely to make the object beautiful. A difficulty attached to this principle, however, is the risk of losing the perspective: perhaps one puts oneself through disproportional discomfort trying to make one beautiful, actually counteracting the goal of the framework. Another common principle states that pleasant activities ought to be as equally distributed between individuals as possible. An issue with this principle is that it assumes that these activities result in equal amounts of well-being in all receivers, which – of course – must not be true. For instance, chocolate do not have to be equally distributed to a group of individuals, if some of the individuals are much fonder of chocolate than others; indeed, some may actually dislike chocolate. Yet another common principle states that scientific and societal research and development ought to be performed, for this may give individuals the power of knowledge necessary for making appropriate decisions, as well as products and services simplifying and improving the every-day life of people. Modern buildings (particularly appreciated during the cold season), modern vehicles, clothing, and food, drugs, computers, etc. all

exemplify excellently useful innovations. In addition, scientific research often gives pleasure even if all applications are ignored – this is the pleasure of intellectual understanding. Even this principle must be controlled, though: for instance, it is no good letting a completely mathematically uninterested person compute millions of digits of π . Offering deliverance from the often awkward reasoning of the framework, principles may significantly simplify the every-day life, but they have to be dealt with carefully.

As mentioned above, one is to seek well-being, but also to avoid discomfort and suffering. In life, there is much to be afraid of, but what is best is not to fear anything, and such a state of mind is indeed attainable. Death, for instance, is nothing to fear. After death, probably not even one's consciousness exists anymore; thus, one will not be able to feel any suffering or discomfort of any kind, and although one will not be able to *experience* any joy either, one will be unable to *miss* it. Some may also fear transience, e.g. that every beautiful thing a man ever created in his life inevitably will vanish in time. All papers a man has written will someday be forgotten, all photographs he has taken will be removed or destroyed, and everything he has taught his students and fellow beings will fade in their memories and be lost at their deaths. It is not hard to feel an emotion of pointlessness about this, about everything being made in vain, for everything will eventually become undone. A similar dread accompanies the idea of being the only human, or even the only intelligent being, or *the only living organism*, in the entire universe; no-one would then be able impressed to read one's articles, astonished to enjoy one's photographs or carefully to listen to one's wisdoms. There would be no-one able to listen to the professor's lectures, to be his student or partner, or even to be his friend. Going through these thoughts, one must remember the framework, that one's work can be performed *solely* because one enjoys it. Indeed, it is a good thing to share one's knowledge and wisdom, and it is a good thing being able to enjoy communication between one's fellow beings, but one can always feel good about one's activities, even though no-one else knows about them. The dread of transience may also be reduced by the knowledge, or rather the belief, that *consciousness and beauty are infinite*. For likely is time, in some sense, infinite, and likely will the universe, or at least different universes, exist in all future time, and there may therefore always be conscious beings able to admire its beauty, and have the intelligence and wisdom as oneself. These beings ought to remember the wisdom that countless individuals long before them have created stunning reports, photographs, and ideas; thus, in some sense, a man's work should always be remembered – it should be assumed to have existed. The obligation to assume the beauty found in the works of historical individuals is a responsibility we all share.

The goal of the framework may be slightly rephrased: *be happy!* Happiness is like a wind, at times blowing through the consciousness, filling the individual with delight and inspiration to live. One ought to capture this wind, locate its sources, and try to multiply them. Then, in times of darkness, these sources may be opened, flooding the individual with exhilaration. Possibly, a great deal of the wisdom lies here. One should not hesitate quickly to reach and thoroughly exploit these sources; instead, one actively

ought to seek them. No matter if one obtains well-being from spending time with one's friends, from sitting alone studying mathematics, from travelling to cities and jungles all around the planet, from cogitation about ethical questions, from exploration of one's sexuality with friends, from composing, performing, or playing music, from voluntarily working in developing countries, from enjoying *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, from playing computer games, or from spending time with domesticated rats, one should in abundance do this.

Consciousness in a Box

When a human being wakes up in the morning, she is able to verify that her body obeys her mind. Normally, the brain faultlessly controls the muscles to perform the motions she wishes, and the sensory function of her skin functions as well: she feels what she touches, and she can determine the atmospheric temperature. Her eyes detect a narrow interval of the electromagnetic spectrum, with wavelengths between approximately 400 and 800 nanometres, from violet to red light. This gives her a quite clear picture of the world in front of her. At the very same time, her ears register longitudinal pressure waves in the atmosphere, giving her the opportunity to perceive events she cannot see. Furthermore, by using sensors in her nasal cavity and tongue, she is able to perform simple chemical analyses of compounds solved in the atmosphere and saliva, respectively. The information from her skin, eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, she perceives, in her consciousness, as *physical sensations, images, sounds, smells, and tastes*. One realises, however, that the connection between physical and conscious perception is not simple; theoretically, it would be possible to perceive the electromagnetic information from the eyes as a sound and the mechanical information from the atmosphere from the ears as an image, though this probably would be less favourable with respect to human orientation and survival. Furthermore, a human being has the ability to *feel* and *think*, i.e. to imagine physical sensations, images, sounds, smells, and tastes, as well as emotions, events and abstract reasoning. If a human would not be able to perceive physical sensations, images, sounds, smells, tastes, thoughts, and emotions, would she then know whether she is alive or not? Perhaps the consciousness may be defined as the perception of these phenomena, almost as "the sum of the senses", or at least as the perception of this sum. We realise, that we by "these phenomena", from the "senses", must also include for instance the information from the equilibrioception, but doing so, will this be an appropriate definition of "consciousness"? An individual lacking all these possibilities of perception might not be able to determine whether she is alive or not. Perhaps, however, there would still be a silent, fundamental "I", a more or less subconscious question mark, revealing to the individual that she is alive? However, if we would consider even *this* perception as a "sense", then, perhaps, the consciousness could be seen as the perception of the senses.

Human knowledge of the universe constantly increases: in general, she is aware of the structure of the universe and her place in it, but one thing she has no

knowledge at all about, is what *she* actually *is*. Indeed, she is an animal, an organism made up of visible matter, but she has no idea whatsoever what her true “I”, her *consciousness*, is. The more time a human being sits thinking about the consciousness, the more sure she should become, that it appears to be completely impossible to explain it, even by the most advanced human sciences; apparently, nothing in the entire universe appears to be able to shed any light on this “mystery”. Of course, physiological and psychological phenomena in humans, for instance, may be explained by neurological processes, but the real *perception*, the consciousness, appears not to be explainable by simple chemistry: when do molecules, or systems of molecules, start to think, feel, and perceive? Assuming that the consciousness at all is comprehensible to human beings, the explanation perhaps may be found in more physically fundamental sciences, such as quantum mechanics and cosmology, on a basic level endeavouring to describe nature. “But aren’t these sciences quite trivial compared to the ‘science’ of consciousness”, I think. Probably, the phenomenon of consciousness is not at all comprehensible to human beings. Perhaps humans only slightly have begun to seek the solution to this question, because they not yet have asked it. Indeed, does not the existence feel obvious, if we do not begin to question it? A human being is programmed to survive, not to understand what she actually is.

Another issue deals with the *formation* of consciousnesses: if human beings, which do have consciousness, have evolved from simple, unicellular organisms lacking consciousness, when did the consciousness form? Was there a first organism with consciousness? Furthermore, if a conscious individual has developed from a zygote, or even better, sperm and egg cells, all lacking consciousness, when did the individual get her consciousness? At a particular millisecond? Moreover, the “location” of the consciousness (or whatever causes it), is a classical question. First, however, we must realise that it is not at all self-evident that the consciousness really do have a physical position. We do not even know what it is; as we have discussed, the consciousness is actually the perception itself, rather than whatever causes it. Thus, it is not self-evident that the “organ” causing the consciousness has a physical position, though the brain would be a qualified guess, for we know that we can lose arms and legs as well as interior organs, without noticing any loss or other unusual effect to our consciousness. The important knowledge, however, is that the function of the consciousness is a major, important question that we apparently cannot answer by studying any known field of contemporary science. A person successfully having realised the existence of the problem, nevertheless, is much more competent than one that have not. A further question is whether human understanding of the consciousness even is desirable, for what cruelties cannot one commit if one artificially were able to create consciousnesses? What torture cannot these consciousnesses be put through, and would the public be wise and knowledgeable enough to realise the dread of the situation and really care about it, when a box or the content of test tube is suffering?

Furthermore, for an exciting experiment of thought, we may construct a set containing the elements “dimension”, “matter”, and “consciousness”: what if there are more elements fitting in this set? What if there are even more “phenomena” that, as with consciousness, do not appear to be explainable or even graspable? Assuming that consciousnesses exist (what do *you* think?), it would not seem too unreasonable if there really were more elements in the set. Probably, the human being’s conception of herself and the universe will be dramatically revised if she would accomplish to understand the phenomenon of the consciousness, or, in comparison, “trivial” things such as the most fundamental structure, origin, and future of the universe.

Absolute Truth

Consider an integer. The *digit sum* of an integer is defined as the sum of its digits. For instance, the integer 53982 has the digit sum $5 + 3 + 9 + 8 + 2 = 27$. I now claim that an integer is guaranteed to be divisible by three *if* the digit sum of the integer is divisible by three.

PROOF: Suppose that the integer Z has the n digits a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n , so that $Z = 10^{n-1} \cdot a_1 + 10^{n-2} \cdot a_2 + \dots + 10 \cdot a_{n-1} + a_n$. Because the digit sum is divisible by three, there is an integer k such that $a_1 + \dots + a_n = 3k$. If we add $Z - (a_1 + \dots + a_n)$ to each side of this equation, the left hand side will equal Z . Because

$$\begin{aligned} Z - (a_1 + \dots + a_n) &= \\ &= 10^{n-1} \cdot a_1 + 10^{n-2} \cdot a_2 + \dots + 10 \cdot a_{n-1} + a_n - (a_1 + \dots + a_n) = \\ &= (10^{n-1} - 1) \cdot a_1 + (10^{n-2} - 1) \cdot a_2 + \dots + (10 - 1) \cdot a_{n-1} + (1 - 1) \cdot a_n = \\ &= \underbrace{9 \dots 9}_{n-1} a_1 + \dots + 999a_{n-3} + 99a_{n-2} + 9a_{n-1} \end{aligned}$$

we obtain $Z = 9 \dots 9a_1 + \dots + 999a_{n-3} + 99a_{n-2} + 9a_{n-1} + 3k$. But dividing Z by three, we obtain the ratio $\frac{Z}{3} = 3 \dots 3a_1 + \dots + 333a_{n-3} + 33a_{n-2} + 3a_{n-1} + k$, which apparently is an integer as well. The proof is completed.

This theorem exemplifies a bit of information we can trust to be true, for we have presented a simple and stringent *proof* of it. We realise that every integer having a digit sum divisible by three *necessarily* must be divisible by three as well. This confidence is found in all (valid) mathematics; valid mathematics is always completely true *due to definitions*. A simpler example of something completely true due to definitions, is the following statement: if we know that a key lies either in closet A or in closet B , and also that it does *not* lie in closet A , then it lies in closet B . Assuming that the preconditions are true, the conclusion must necessarily be true as well. With the exception of all mathematics, however, the absolute truth is a rather rare commodity in the universe. Aiming to describe nature and the universe at the very most fundamental level, *physics* is of course meant to be completely true, but in fact, we cannot be positive. By means of experiments, we can make hypotheses, and using and combining results assumed to be

true, we may – by means of mathematics – deduce new results. These new results will positively be true, as long as the results assumed to be true really *are* true. Essentially, a *physicist* is nothing but a *seeker of truth*, aiming to understand and describe nature, and to predict it (an *engineer* may also try to improve it). Being completely honest and stringent, however, we must admit that almost nothing except for mathematical facts is positively true: in fact, a man drinking a cup of coffee cannot be positive about his drinking coffee – perhaps he is just dreaming it. Perhaps “he” is not even a man, but a woman. Perhaps he is not even a human being. (It also depends on the definitions of “he”, “being”, and “human”. For instance, “being” might refer to “real life” (define!) as well as to the current daydream.) However, a man drinking coffee and feeling just as normal may think of himself as a man drinking coffee, for the situation may otherwise become exceedingly complicated, but one ought to remember, that this in fact merely is a hypothesis, though, perhaps, an extremely probable one. The probability of the hypothesis’ being false may be negligible, but always greater than zero. A human being is not omniscient, but an individual humbly admitting and tenaciously assuming that she does not know everything, can never be wrong, for all her statements start with the phrase “unless I am mistaken”; thus, a human possessing great knowledge becomes *more* omniscient if she merely admits her not being omniscient. Consequently, a wise man ought never to be surprised, for if he becomes surprised, then he must have assumed unproven facts.

Moral and philosophical propositions are often particularly approximate and vague. As an example, let us study the proposition “It is never one’s fault when two people quarrel”; in order to analyse this proposition, we must first know exactly what it means. “Two people quarrelling” may be defined as two people having different views of an issue, so that they cannot “go on” and so that they feel emotions of hostility to each other. “It is one’s fault” means “one has made a violation against the framework”. If two individuals cannot stand each other’s lifestyles, then the argument is perhaps the “fault” of both persons, confirming the proposition. On the other hand, if one of them have destroyed the other’s home for pleasure (not likely, yet possible), one might almost consider the following, quite probable, argument to be the “fault” of just one person. (Please remember, however, that we by “fault” merely mean “not having followed the framework”; we do not mean that the person having destroyed the house is “evil”.) Thus, using our definitions, we have proven the statement false. We can try slightly to revise the statement: “It is *seldom* one’s fault when two people quarrel.” In order for this statement to be true, the probability of the quarrel’s being only one’s fault ought to be less than 50 %. If this can be shown to be the case, then the statement may be considered valid, using our definitions. Often when one discuss moral propositions, it may be *understood* that the propositions actually are to contain “softening words”, such as “often”, “seldom”, etc.

One of the most difficult problems concerning uncertainty of truth is *the problem of the single consciousness*. A single individual, having consciousness, can never know for sure if there is anyone else having a consciousness as well. Jean, for instance,

knows for sure that *he* has a consciousness, but he does not even know for sure whether or not *his wife* have a consciousness as well; theoretically, one could construct a robot (lacking consciousness) perfectly resembling a human being (with consciousness). No one would be able to tell them apart (at least as long as we do not know how the consciousness works). In fact, Jean may be the only human – or even the only organism in the entire universe – really possessing a consciousness. Indeed, he *looks* like everyone else, but yet he may be the only truly “existing” individual. However, *he has a consciousness*, and a comfort to everyone who finds this problem frightening, is that the number 1 is not “natural” in all senses: phenomena existing in the universe, you see, seldom occur alone. If you find a tiny planet in a galaxy, there are probably many other tiny planets as well, having formed in similar ways. If you find a cactus in a desert, you are likely to find more cacti in the same desert. If you find a consciousness, there are likely many more. The number of atoms, organisms, planets, and stars in our universe *are* huge. The number of consciousnesses in our universe *ought* to be huge. Perhaps, however, the entire universe – as Jean observes it – is merely a (computer?) simulation produced in another, more “real” universe. Then it might become more “likely” there is just one consciousness in our universe, for it is not “natural”. A comfort exists, nevertheless: no matter how Jean’s universe has formed, it is indeed *his* universe, to him as real as any world. Particularly, however, the goal of the framework is independent of both the number of existing consciousnesses and the origin of the universe: in any case, Jean has a consciousness, and is able to feel happiness and suffering.

When one says, “one shall help other people”, one really ought to say, “one shall help other people, *if they have consciousness*”. Feeling awkward ending every sentence with this “softening clause”, it can be omitted and implicit. Moreover, we ought to assume that the hypothesis in the *problem with the single consciousness* is false (why?). The recognition of this softening clause and this assumption may be called *the standard assumptions of the problem of consciousnesses*.

Social Behaviour

One must be careful with moral truths. Because all humans should have the very same goal – to increase the well-being of all involved individuals – conflicts should never occur, for everyone should acknowledge that she might be wrong. Instead of quarrelling, they should establish that they indeed share the same goal and then together find out which method of achieving the goal is best. Imagine two cities, once upon a time arguing about which of them should get a new shopping centre built in it; representatives from both cities appeared certain about their city’s being the most suitable. In reality, there were of course a best choice, however, and a location in that city would overall result in more well-being than a location in the other city. Thus, at least one of the representatives must have been wrong, a “liar”, you could call him. Instead of arguing with each other, they should have realized this and together tried to find the truth: in which city should the shopping centre be located, if the well-being is to increase the most?

Then, having determined this, both representatives ought to be pleased, for they have tried to make people as happy as possible.

The framework does not say that one always should to tell the truth; instead, this is a principle. It is a good principle, indeed, for accurate knowledge often brings about morally well-considered decisions and technologically useful results. As all principles, however, it must be controlled; it is common practice among humans to use lies, fearing that the truth may hurt the listener or reader. Such a “white lie” may for instance be told when a human has bought a new jumper and asks her friend what she thinks about it. The friend, who does not at all like the jumper (particularly, she finds the colour dreadful), has the opportunity of telling a “white lie”, pretending she actually likes the jumper. This may be considered a wise course of action, as the fellow being may feel sad if she learns the truth, but perhaps we should not discard the principle that easily. After having told our “white lie”, for instance, believing her friend actually likes the aesthetical properties of the jumper, the fellow being might buy a similar jumper to her, which would counteract the framework. In addition, it is preferable that humans can trust each other, and believe that information they have been given from another human being is correct, or at least that the sender of the message *intends* it to be correct. However, if the use of “white lies” is well known, this trust might be reduced. Perhaps it is even worse if “white lies” occur although it is *not* commonly known; then, the distribution of false information may increase. Thus, “white” lies are rather “grey”. No matter how good one’s intentions are, “grey lie” should be avoided whenever possible (so that the framework will be furthered). Actually, it ought always to be possible, because, if everyone really shares the same goal, then the truth should not be something one needs to hide. One could talk about three “levels of stupidity” (LOS), where one in level one almost cruelly says what one thinks, in level two uses a “grey lie”, and in level three one uses a small piece of honest psychology.

- What do you think about my new jumper?
- It’s among the most dreadful jumpers I have ever seen. (LOS 1)

- What do you think about my new jumper?
- Quite nice, indeed. Nice colour too... (LOS 2)

- What do you think about my new jumper?
- Interesting design. I do not really think it is my style, but the important think is that you like it. (LOS 3)

You can go far using nothing but honesty. One should also notice that a wise man receiving a comment of type LOS 1 should not be angry; instead, he should realize that his friend merely lacks some psychological knowledge, or perhaps has a “bad day” (or, possibly, a “bad life”). In the first case, he should tell his friend what she does not

know, but also that people actually should not be upset by LOS 1 comments, at least not as long as they are true and not deliberately mean. Furthermore, it is also an important principle always to reply to (seriously meant) questions, for if one ignores a question, the one asking it may feel sad, as if the other person does not wish to talk to her. Particularly in (modern) written communication, where many people spontaneously do not always feel the “instinct” to reply, this principle is important to have in mind. Especially if the sender of the letter has a smaller social network than average, written communication may be additionally emotionally important to her. Thus, for instance, simply replying, “No, I do not have time for it” is much better than not replying at all.

Being among humans, either one can act instinctively, which most people probably do, or one can act rationally, which may be somewhat wiser. For instance, whereas many *instinctively feel* that they should remain at the table and wait for the others to finish after having eaten a dinner, one may instead think “the lifeforms that I currently visit are used to remaining at the table until everyone has finished, and therefore they may appreciate my waiting for them as well”. Meeting each other for the first time in a day, while many spontaneously says “hello” to each other, one may deduce that one ought to do the same. When others feel, one may think. This may result in one’s becoming more *socially compatible*, which means that one without difficulty can spend time with many different kinds of people. Whereas for instance a business director may find it difficult communicating with a vagrant, or whereas a religious person may unlike discussing issues with a geneticist, a rationally controlled individual may easily communicate with all types of people, from politicians, researchers, artists and writers, to religious people, film stars, porn stars, and homeless people. All she needs to do is to deduce how she ought to act in order to be accepted by and be trustworthy to her partner; of course, she does not alter her personality, views, and values, but accepts all (morally acceptable) ways of life, and adapts her way of communicating. As a consequence, she may transfer messages virtually to anyone. Furthermore, having communicated with a person that she found nice, she does not assume that this person found her nice as well, for this would be to assume unproven facts, which may lead to surprise and disappointment. Instead, she assumes she cannot know how the person found her: perhaps she found her nice, perhaps she did not care about her at all, or perhaps she found her uncomfortable and rather appalling. Anyhow, she cares about her partner, and wishes her all success. A wise man cares for everyone, but does not require any “thank you”.

Persons acting instinctively in social situations, however, may become surprised, disappointed, annoyed, and enraged. Consider a person giving her friend a box of chocolates. Likely, many would think of the giver as the nice and caring person, and the receiver as the one “merely taking”, but perhaps the giver’s sole reason for giving the box is to feel good about herself? Perhaps the receiver feels “selfish” receiving the chocolates? Perhaps the giver is the “selfish” one? Another interesting phenomenon is that a person that has been given something, e.g. a dinner, may feel “obligated” to make a dinner for her friend at a later occasion, as some kind of “repayment”. What are we to think

about that? Indeed, it is great that they make each other glad, but the (negative) feeling of “obligation” is not good, so the first person should neither require nor expect the other to “pay back”, as well as the other person neither should require nor expect to be invited to begin with. Assuming that the first person feels good about inviting the second person, whereas the second person would feel uneasiness inviting the first person (for instance if she does not enjoy having guests at home, or if she does not enjoy cooking), then the total well-being might decrease if the second person were to “pay back”. Thus, in this example, it is acceptable, and even desirable, if the first person repeatedly invites the second person, who never has to pay back, as long as the first person feels good about it, of course. The overall well-being increases as much as possible this way; both persons will become as happy as possible, and that is what matters. One might believe that many conflicts among human beings start completely “without reason”, after someone’s having required or expected an alternative behaviour from another person. The only thing one is allowed to “require” from another human being is that she furthers the framework.

In general, one may also observe that the human being has a rather strange relationship to her own sexuality. During the cold season, in countries where the temperature drops below the preferred living temperature, humans put clothes on so they will not lose too much thermal energy to the surroundings. This appears to be a very natural idea. During the warm season, however, when the temperature is perfectly fitting, or perhaps even too high, humans are still wearing clothes, and not only to protect themselves from the intensive sun; this behaviour is not self-evident. The reason appears to be that human beings psychologically dislike to show their reproductive organs to each other. In some countries, it may even be illegal not to wear clothes at public places; thus, looking like a (natural) human is illegal there. Discussing animal rights, a common principle states that animals feel good when they are allowed to act naturally, and the question is if not human beings would feel better, if the taboo of sexuality was removed, if humans very well could walk around naked and why not also spontaneously mate with people they meet in public areas (perhaps using contraceptives to avoid planet overpopulation and damage to human careers), and if monogamy were to be replaced by polygamy. Perhaps this would also eradicate the concept of loneliness, if access to intimacy between humans were simplified. Perhaps the concept of rapes would also go away, as rapes no longer would be as “necessary” (if the reader is kind enough to interpret the quotation marks appropriately). Besides, if a rape were to happen, it is possible that the psychological difficulties for the victim would be greatly reduced, for the subject would no longer be a taboo. Furthermore, perhaps problems concerning fixation of appearance would reduce, as well as humans’ discomfort considering their own bodies. Perhaps humans would be happier, if they were allowed to live more naturally. However, perhaps it lies in the human nature to feel good only when living with only one, life-long, friend, and avoiding physical contact with all other fellow beings.

Crime without Punishment

Some social behaviours are worse than others. One example of a “worse” behaviour is the entire concept of crime and punishment. The concept says that humans having behaved in an unacceptable way, often but not always in violation of the framework, ought to suffer through punishment. However, suffering itself is a violation of the framework, so, of course, putting humans through this is likely to be wrong. A murderer, for instance, has probably behaved immorally, but yet, if he suffers, it is just as bad as if someone else were to undergo the same suffering, for the framework forbids the suffering itself. Indeed, punishment may be a deterrent, lowering the frequency of crimes, but disregarding such effects, punishment is not justifiable. One may also consider secondary relations, such as if the victim and her relatives – for some unpleasant reason – would feel good if the “criminal” were punished, but such “needs” ought to be dealt with by other means. The fundamental cause of the concept of crime and punishment is likely the human emotional need for *vengeance*, to hurt whoever has hurt oneself. Vengeance, of course, is against the framework; a wise man ought never to seek revenge. Imagine yourself as the one suffering from a punishment. “I would never commit a crime”, the usual response is, but that is irrelevant, for suffering is equally bad to everyone able to experience it. (Moreover, the most common definition of a “crime” differs from “violation of the framework”, as we will see in the next section.) A similar conception is the one of “good and evil”. It appears that, spontaneously, many humans consider people committing major crimes to be “evil”; by “evil”, they seem to mean something like “only interested in causing suffering”, and that it does not matter whether an “evil” person suffers or not; perhaps they even want “evil” persons to suffer. “There is no such thing as evil”, the wise man replies.

Carl has grown up with his mother and uncle. The latter has beaten Carl and his mother during Carl’s entire childhood. At the age of 22, Carl kills his uncle. Of course (or?), this is wrong, a violation of the framework, but there was reason, that many people probably can understand. And because there was a reason, they would not think of Carl as being “evil”. Melinda suffers from troublesome mental health: she hears voices and hallucinates. One day, she grabs a knife and assaults a man on the market. Of course, this is very wrong, but there was a reason, and Melinda is not “evil”; maybe she could not even help it. George is homeless and broke. One day he robs a supermarket, hoping to obtain money to live for. Of course (or?), this is wrong, but George is not “evil”. Eric has lived alone his entire life; he has never had any true friend, and because of that, he panics every time he observes a woman his age or younger, for she reminds him of what he has never had. On his way home from work, one day, he runs into a slightly younger woman on a path surrounded by dark forests. He has had a “bad day”, feels as depressed as usual, forces the woman into the forest, and rapes her. Of course, this is wrong, but there was a reason, and Carl is not “evil”. Many more examples can easily be constructed, and they will all end with “... is not ‘evil’”, for there is always a reason. One may also consider the instantaneous motives. A woman taking care of her child only follows her in-

instincts, and all persons having violated the framework in the above examples have done nothing else; thus, considering the instantaneous motives, those “criminals” are no more “evil” than a good mother. But of course, in many cases the persons committing “crimes” are aware of their violating the framework. Moreover, if these “criminals” are no more “evil” than the mother, they ought not to be punished any more than she is to be punished, i.e. not at all; perhaps, though, they would require medical or psychological treatment, and, of course, society must make sure that they cannot harm anyone else. In consequence, a wise man ought never to be angry, for anger often implies surprise, and anger seldom results in any improvement, and there is no “evil” to get angry at. A word of notice, though: we have used our definition of “evil” in all examples in this section, and there is indeed no such thing as *that*. However, if we use another definition of the word, such as simply “bad things happening”, there might be a lot of “evil” in the world.

A major part of being wise is not to be narrow-minded. Imagine a person sharing Eric’s background. He is very depressed; he is hardly motivated to live, and he panics every time he observes a woman in his age; observing a younger woman, she reminds him of how alone and depressed he was at that age, and that he never will be able to repair the damage, for that time in his life will never come back again. That is even worse. Every time he observes his own body, he feels bad, for he has never been allowed to share it with someone else. The one, tiny, element of happiness in his life, is his work. Thus, he is truly depressed and mentally tortured, but yet he successfully chooses not to violate the framework by committing a rape or any other crime. Nevertheless, in a letter, he does mention his mental distress to a female co-worker; perhaps being a somewhat *too* honest person, he also mentions that it *feels like* he almost has to commit a rape, but that he, of course, never would do such a thing. Indeed, what he needs is a true friend, not only flesh. Having found out about this confession, the man’s chief, however, alters the truth, and says the man has *threatened* to commit a rape. Though begging, the man is dismissed from his job, locked into a hospital, and all the friends he believed he had, and to whom he turns hoping for support, turn their backs against him; they ignore mail he sends them, and walking into him at public places, they pretend to look in another direction. Eventually, the man turns to one of his former colleagues in particular, a woman who he believed to be more loyal and morally gifted than the others, but she completely ignores him as well. The man starts to receive menacing, anonymous phone calls and strange mail, and one day he finds his car destroyed. All former co-workers and “friends”, however, do their very best to support the female friend, to whom he sent the letter. No friend thinks about the man, who has no-one at all who cares for him, and who has not even committed a crime, and who – of course – is not evil. Even though he now more than most humans and now more than ever would need the support of friends, he is left alone. What hatred does not this seed in him? In worst case, he commits suicide; otherwise, he may strengthen, but he may never again trust a human being. Assume that he, who wants everyone to be happy, wants to make everything right again, by trying to establish a dialogue to his former “friends”, although they have turned their backs

against him: then if no-one would listen to him, perhaps he abandons the framework, and, feeling that no-one cares about him, actually commits a rape. “I deserve to get *something* too”, he may feel; humans can have a quite developed sense of what is “fair”. Such a consequence is sad, but probably not very unlikely; the society does not get better citizens than it deserves. If, on the contrary, his friends had been there for him, showing him friendship, support, and love, he might not just have remained law-abiding, but also *happy*, but no-one of his former “friends” thought about that. One day, at the train station, he runs into the female “friend” – let us ironically call her “Sophia” – who had ignored all his calls for help. He approaches her and observes her turning away, wishing not to be observed by him. Saying “hello” to her, she acts surprised. Asking her, why she ignored all his mail, she replied that she felt obligated to care for the female friend, to whom he had sent the letter, and that she did not want to have any contact with him whatsoever; the fact that the man had been alone and in distress, she did not want to recognize. The man did not get angry, but told Sophia he had believed her to be wiser than that.

Animal Rights

Human beings have a tendency to consider themselves more “important” than animals of other species. For instance, such animals are *consumed* for food, cloths, entertainment, and – why not – decorations. It appears as if many human beings believe that suffering among non-human animals is less tragic than suffering among humans. This belief – of course – is completely taken out of thin air, for the framework axiomatically states that suffering is equally bad to all consciousnesses able to feel it. Indeed, an individual unable to see does not need to be protected against frightening images, and an individual unable to hear, does not need to be protected against frightening sounds. Nevertheless, what an individual really does perceive is real and important, for it may result in joy as well as torture. Ignoring chronically and psychological traumas, putting a human through pain, for instance by burning or cutting her arm, is not any worse than if another, non-human animal having equal ability to feel this kind of pain, were put through it. Also, if a human is put through psychological suffering, for instance by means of frightening images, this is no worse than if a non-human animal having equal ability to feel this kind of suffering, were put through it. However, it may be very difficult to tell to which extent individuals of different species are able to experience psychological suffering; this is a field of science earning more research, so that we humans can become better at helping other animals. The important wisdom, however, is that equal suffering implies equal tragedy.

Many humans are carnivores; probably, many of those consider it morally acceptable to kill (non-human) animals in order to obtain food from them. Assuming these people only have the “usual” “food is tasty” argument, i.e. a purely egoistic argument, and the suffering among the animals are comparable to the suffering a human feels due to a rape, then, logic says, the “crime” of killing animals and eating meat is just

as severe as the “crime” of committing a rape. It may even be *even worse*, for the emotional impulse of the perpetrator (the slaughterer/carnivore versus the rapist) ought to be much stronger in the second case, and also, some cases of animal cruelty are really ... extreme. Please notice, however, that no-one is “evil”; a rapist most often violates the framework, but she is not “evil”. A person slaughtering animals and eating their meat perhaps violates the framework as well, but she is not “evil” either. If we, on the contrary, assume that the production of meat does not result in any suffering at all for any animal, the “crime” will be much less. In such case, the question becomes “it is important to be alive rather than dead?” A living individual may affect other living individuals; thus, the living-dead status of an organism is important to the rest of the world, although such influences often are extremely difficult to forecast. (Homer Simpson: “I’m pretty sure she was going to be the next Hitler!”) Disregarding such effects, we are forced to make a definition. As mentioned some sections above, a living organism is able to feel well-being, so life is probably more preferable. Perhaps the most well-known and worst example of abuse of animals today, is bullfighting, likely causing enormous suffering to the animals, while the audience of (moronic) humans laugh and sing. One easily gets the impression that the bull is far wiser than the humans; sometimes, intelligence (in a strict, non-moral sense) blinds wisdom.

Generally, humans appear completely to have misunderstood the axiomatic framework. One might, for instance, hear so-called “friends of the environment” being against whaling, claiming the (whale) *species* is threatened. Indeed, this is *one* argument to outlaw whaling, but – of course – there is one much more important reason: the hunted and captured animals suffer (probably a great deal as well)! A similar “miss the point” example is the following argument for hunting: “the growth rate of the species is too high and must be reduced”. However, a species truly having a too high rate of growth, and being

HAIR-RAISING EXAMPLE

Linus, a three year old boy, has during his entire life lived with his parents in a cottage, that one day, when Linus is at home alone, catch fire after an explosion due to a gas leak. Arriving at the scene of the accident, the firemen are told by the neighbor that Linus is still alive inside the building. Remembering that the earth already is overpopulated, the firemen allow themselves a coffee break, waiting for the house to burn down completely, so they easily can extinguish the fire.

responsible for major environmental damage as well, is indeed *the human being*, being almost a parasite on the planet. Why not use this argument to shoot some humans once in a while? Hunting probably results in suffering in the animals being hunted, as well as in their young or parents. Assuming these levels of suffering are comparable to the one of a raped human, then the “crimes” of hunting and raping are comparable, as well. (But no-one is “evil”, of course.) Spontaneously, however, many people believe it is a less severe crime to hunt and eat meat, than it is to commit a rape. This is likely (indirectly) caused by the fact, that most people actually believe so. If human beings instead lived “naturally”, as described some sections above, rapes would perhaps not be considered to

be particularly severe “crimes”. In addition, if the humans also were strict vegetarians, and the majority of all humans never could imagine killing an animal for pleasure (or/such as food), it is likely that the opposite would apply: hunting would be dered severe “crimes”, whereas a rape at most would be considered highly disrespectful. In the current society, however, where rapes often result in major suffering for the victims, it is, of course, a very severe “crime”, as is hunting. The problem is that humans spontaneously do not appear to consider the second “crime” to be severe, which causes unnecessary suffering to animals. A wise man realizes all animals are equal – a human is an animal, equal to prinks, minks, roosters, and rats, and all conscious animals are to be treated with the same respect and care. Virtually all use of suffering animals merely for human pleasure ought to be prohibited. Animals should not be hold to produce fur, for humans can live without fur without suffering (of course). Assuming animals suffer during production of meat, the same thing applies here. All activities resembling bullfighting ought forcefully to be outlawed. Animal experiments within medical and pharmacological research should be used as if the test subjects were humans: if few individuals must suffer slightly in order to save many more individuals from severe suffering, it is acceptable according to our framework, as long as no better option is available. If, on the contrary, many animals have to suffer a great deal just to save a few humans from some minor suffering, it is – of course – not acceptable. The fundamental principle, again, is no more difficult than this: well-being is equally important to all individuals able to experience well-being, and suffering is equally severe to all individuals able to experience suffering; human beings are no exception. “It is frightening”, one might say, “that you consider humans to be equal to pigs.” “Then, would it not be frightening”, the wise man replies, “if you belonged to a species or race, whose well-being was considered irrelevant to a superior and dominant lifeform?”

Perhaps human beings would become more ethical if they would spend more time together with other species, but considering hunters etc., perhaps not. Perhaps humans just have to start thinking more thoroughly than “the majority is right”, and “as one ‘always’ have done, so shall one continue doing”, to start thinking about the axiomatically moral of life?