University of Alberta

A Philosophical Investigation of the Myth of Organic Unity

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Philosophy

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 2007

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-33159-0
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-33159-0

For my dearest parents,

Mrs. Hua Wang and Professor Bao-Guo Wang,

Whose wit, love, and support have always been my strength.

Abstract

In this thesis, I offer a reconstruction of Robert Nozick's theory of value by putting it into a utilitarian framework. His claims, expressed in his famous "experience machine" thought-experiment, generally are taken to undermine forms of utilitarianism that tend to maximize the amount of felt experience. This thesis, however, suggests that such a position does not rule out the possibility of other forms of utilitarianism, like Hare's or Brink's, nor does it exclude the plausibility of recasting his theory of value by appeal to utilitarian considerations. In effect, drawing on the elements of both R. M. Hare's preference-satisfaction utilitarianism and David O. Brink's objective utilitarianism, I argue that Nozick's conception of value-as-organic-unity could be put on utilitarian groundings.

Acknowledgements

I am delighted to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Wesley Cooper, for his insightful guidance and generous participation. I am full of gratitude for the sustained energy and invaluable care that he has given my work. Cordial thanks also to professors Jennifer Welchman and Bruce Hunter for being my supervisory committee members, to Professor James Mulvihill for being an external examiner, and Professor and Associate Dean Bernard Linsky for being the committee chair of my defense. I am indebted to all my committee for their time and their interest, especially to Professor Jennifer Welchman for sharing her philosophical insights and providing useful and prompt feedback.

My grateful thanks are also due to Professor Dave Clyburn, Mr. Ken Bond, Mr. Octavian Ion, and Mr. Stephen Kuntz for their rigorous editorial support which has been truly invaluable for getting the thesis to this point. The same sincere gratitude goes to Dr. Brendan Leier, Mrs. Anita Theroux, Mrs. Wendy Minns, Mrs. Ellen Neumann, Mrs. Carol Nahorniak, and Mrs. Lilla Lesko for their emotional encouragement and partial financial support by offering me either academic-related or non-academic part-time positions. I am very grateful for their kindness.

Most importantly, I wish to thank my family. I dedicate this thesis work to my dearest mother, Mrs. Hua Wang, whose love and support enabled me to stand on my own legs, to my dearest father, Professor Bao-Guo Wang, whose passionate commitment to his teaching and research bred a model of integrity for me to emulate, and to my loving big brother, Dr. Dong Wang, whose wit and encouragement equipped me with a positive attitude and constant inspiration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Robert Nozick in his book *Philosophical Explanations* cautions that in the seemingly complete picture of the world that science describes, no room seems to be left for any ethical facts or truths. In contradistinction to this scientific image, Nozick sketches out an integrated picture of value by not only showing "what an objective ethics might look like" but also explicating "how there (so much as) could be such a thing."[1]

His philosophical investigation, however, is not rooted in an attempt to convince or force anyone to adopt his viewpoints on value by presenting coercive arguments. Rather, he intends to sketch a tentative picture of value by offering an explanatory account in regards to how there can be objective value, and in what respect, if any, there is room for it. Nozick precisely describes this methodological insight in the introduction to his book *Philosophical Explanations* where he writes:

> Philosophy without arguments, in one mode, would guide someone to a view....At no point is the person forced to accept anything. He moves along gently, exploring his own and the author's thoughts. He explores together with the author, moving only where he is ready to; then he stops. Perhaps, at a later time mulling it over or in a second reading, he will move further. With this manner of writing, an author might circle back more than once to the same topic....the thought might go further out as it goes along, reaching finally ideas so speculative that even the author is not willing (yet?) to assert them, barely willing even to entertain them. Such a book could not convince everybody of what it says—it wouldn't try.[2]

Again, near the end of the introduction, Nozick stresses the primacy of his concern. He explicitly says:

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[1] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 400.
[2] Ibid. p. 7.

> This book puts forward its explanations in a very tentative spirit; not only do I not ask you to believe they are correct, I do not think it important for me to believe them correct, either. Still, I do believe, and hope you will find it so, that these proposed explanations are illuminating and worth considering, that they are worth surpassing; also, that the process of seeking and elaborating explanations, being open to new possibilities, the new wonderings and wanderings, the free exploration, is itself a delight.[3]

In his account of value, Nozick specifies that the notion of value which he investigates mainly refers to intrinsic value. Things which have intrinsic value are valuable in themselves, rather than being valuable in their capacity to bring about some other goods. He hypothesizes a dimension, which he terms "intrinsic value dimension D," and articulates that this particular dimension which grounds all or most of our considered judgments of intrinsic value is the basic dimension of intrinsic value. As we can see, Nozick's value theory carries a highly speculative view that intrinsic value is identical to (degree of) "unity in diversity" or organic unity, and takes value-as-organic-unity as one of the evaluative dimensions. He proceeds "on the assumption that organic unity is the basic dimension of value, accounting for almost all differences in intrinsic value"[4]; but he does not offer much in the way of argument in defense of his tentative position on value, nor does he want to provide coercively knockdown arguments in criticizing opposing views.

The term "organic unity" is originally derived from an organismic biological definition; that is, "wholes whose parts are related and homeostatically regulated in intricate and complicated ways [are] unified through time despite changes in the

[3] Ibid. p. 24.
[4] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 418.

parts."[5] Nozick's "organic unity" is a "unity in diversity"; that is, it consists of both the degree of unity and the degree of diversity within an entity. The more diverse the material that is unified, the higher degree of organic unity and the greater value it has.

Nozick considers five possible ways in which we relate to value, and gives considerable weight to the fifth one, which he terms *realizationism*. Realizationism is one possible position according to which our relation to value consists in the fact that "we choose or determine that there be values, that they exist, but their character is independent of us."[6] By way of comparison, such a realizationist perspective is a familiar view in the philosophy of mathematics: Human beings created numbers a few millennia ago, but the nature of numbers, as disclosed by the progress of mathematics, is independent of us. Our theorizing about calculus, trigonometry, etc., is largely dependent of continuous discoveries rather than our invention about each of them. Realizationism in Nozick's sense is distinct from the metaethical view called moral realism (which Nozick classifies as a form of Platonism). Moral realists roughly hold that there are moral facts, and that moral facts in light of which our moral judgments are true or false are independent of our beliefs. This view is shared by David Brink, for example, whose objective utilitarianism is discussed below. His version of moral realism is concerned with a metaethical view, which will not be developed here, that identifies moral facts with physical microstructure. Nozick in this respect, however, is committed to no such identities. Those moral facts that are

[5] Ibid. p. 416.
[6] Ibid. p. 555.

mind-independent, in his view, are dependent on moral facts that were created. For instance, integrity as an ideal would not exist without us; it is mind-dependent. But the integrity of a politician is mind-independent in that it requires knowledge of the politician's role in a political institution and discovery of how he lived up to that role or abused it. Given our relation to value so construed, Nozick develops his account of objective value by elucidating his realizationist proposal that value is organic unity.

Nozick's construal of value as organic unity, however, is challenged for being mythical in terms of the inadequacies or vagueness of his treatment of organic unity. Hailwood in his book *Exploring Nozick: Beyond Anarchy, State and Utopia* critiques Nozick's conception of organic unity by questioning the insightfulness of Nozick's emphasis on unification. It seems to Hailwood that there are two criteria which underpin Nozick's construal of organic unity: One criterion is the unity induced; the other is the diversity of the material. These, in Hailwood's view, are indispensable constituents of the construed notion of organic unity. Nozick's account, however, fails to consider in sufficient detail how the two are related, and this thereby renders the account prone to the charge that it is mythical.

One way to respond to this charge is to show how the theory of value as organic unity can be implemented within normative ethical frameworks. The possibility for such an implementation would undermine the critique, since vagueness and lack of clarity are only detrimental to the extent that they preclude that possibility.

The purpose of this thesis is to recast Nozick's theory of intrinsic value as organic unity by putting it into a utilitarian framework. As we will see, the arguments will

illustrate that Nozick's value theory in itself makes room for such a utilitarian construal, even though he himself is not a proponent of utilitarianism. His Experience Machine thought-experiment, on the contrary, is intended as a critique of utilitarianism, but I will argue that it applies only to those classical forms which equate utility with some measure of felt experience. Contemporary preference-satisfaction utilitarianism (like R. M. Hare's) and ideal/objective utilitarianism (like David Brink's), however, are free of such equations. The proposed recasting is to explore two distinct utilitarian groundings, without prejudice to the question whether one or the other is true.

The first of these two utilitarian groundings is Hare's preference-satisfaction (or two-levels) utilitarianism, which at the critical (or justificatory) level maximizes expected preference-satisfaction but at the intuitive level accepts those common-sense principles and intuitions that as a package best implement the critical level's demand for maximization.

In order to explain the role of organic unity in frameworks like Hare's I need a stipulative distinction between preferences *de dicto* and preferences *de re*. The former pertains to the representative character that the desire has in virtue of its meaning or content; typically one can state the *de dicto* preference, as in "I want to go to the museum". The latter pertains to something that the desire's content in fact represents, whether known to the subject or not; the *de dicto* preference just mentioned might in fact represent an organic unity, though perhaps only an organic-unity theorist could point this out.

Organic unity would typically be vindicated at Hare's intuitive level via *de dicto* preferences for specific activities, etc., that are *de re* preferences for organic unity. For instance, parents might inculcate *de dicto* preferences to attend art museums in their children, preferences for activities with high *de re* organic unity, compared to the kids down the block, who have *de dicto* preferences to play the video game *Doom*, a preference that represents *de dicto* an activity with relatively low organic unity. Parents in everyday life would not talk about the Aristotelian principle or related ideas, and the children would not come to have *de dicto* preferences for organic unities. However their *de dicto* desires to visit art museums, etc., would be *de re* desires for organic unities. On this interpretation, the children's *de dicto* desires to see Salvador Dali's exhibit are in fact desires for something with organic unities relatively greater than the mere enjoyment of playing video games. The parents' imperative to visit museums is justified from the critical level, not because their imperative represents an organic unity, but rather to the extent that doing so maximizes the child's preference satisfaction; and those satisfied preferences are, we are supposing, *de re* preferences for organic unities.

The second of these two groundings for organic unity is Brink's objective utilitarianism, his version of what is usually categorized as ideal utilitarianism. Like Nozick, Brink is committed to ideals that may or may not be reflected in individual preferences, or even preferences that are honored within a culture. His conception of objective welfare exhibits an affinity with Nozick's views, even though he, unlike Nozick, puts these ideals into the utiles of a maximizing conception of value.

It is worth pausing here to emphasize that the current project makes no attempt to draw a picture in which either Hare's or Brink's insight is the unique vehicle for the proposed recasting of Nozick's theory of value. Instead, it is enough to show that either is available as a utilitarian grounding for organic unity. Indeed, there are surely other forms of utilitarianism that could equally be shown to provide theoretical underpinnings for Nozick's idea. The point here is to showcase how the recasting in utilitarian terms would possibly go. So utilitarians who respond to the appeal of organic unity may find comfort whether they follow Hare or Brink.

The thesis is divided into two parts. In Part I, I undertake two main tasks: The first one serves as a background, giving a partly historical overview of various moral positions in metaethics. I discuss some realist and anti-realist positions, focusing on issues regarding whether or not moral claims can be correct in the sense that they possess independent objective content. Equipped with these distinctions, I then turn to the second task, elaborating the standpoint that Nozick takes with regards to what constitutes the objectivity of value. I discuss his notion of intrinsic value, his idea of organic unity, and his account of the doctrine of value as (degree of) organic unity.

In Part II, I begin by proposing an interpretation that incorporates Nozick's theory of value into Hare's utilitarian framework. I argue that, at the level of intuitive thinking, something like John Rawls's Aristotelian principle, understood as a motivational principle with a *ceteris paribus* clause, helps justify many *de re* pursuits of organic unities in everyday life. It may even justify pursuit of *de dicto* organic unities on the part of those who are motivated by Nozick's discussion of value.

When it comes to the critical level, pursuing objects that display organic unity may have a tendency to produce benefits for both the individual and all those involved. In such cases, the pursuit of organic unity is justified only to the extent that it promotes the maximal satisfaction of considered preferences. The pursuit of organic unity (whether *de re* or *de dicto*) is purely instrumental, for this reason.

Putting the matter in this way, the Harean interpretation opens up a potential gap between Nozick's ideas about tracking value and what can be justified at Hare's critical level. Whether maximization of preference satisfaction calls for pursuit of organic unities is an entirely empirical matter. Those who resist this posture—Nozick would certainly be among them—may prefer Brink's Mill[7] to Hare's Bentham. A considered preference for push-pin over poetry does not decide the matter. Corresponding to Mill's higher pleasures, there are Brink's objective utilities, a list of intrinsic goods such as education, friendship, etc., that belong in any good life. This account installs an ideal-tracking account into a teleological moral structure. More in the spirit of Nozick's theory, it is a significant utilitarian alternative to Hare's two-level view.

Part I: Nozick's Investigation of Value as Organic Unity

1. Introduction

Within the philosophical tradition of ethical theory, various crisscrossing

[7] John Stuart Mill too is an ideal utilitarian. He makes essentially the same distinction as Hare's when he acknowledges secondary principles like ones protecting rights, although the principle of utility remains his primary axiom. Brink is chosen instead of Mill because he eschews some problems of Mill's account and is widely regarded as a pretty good version of ideal utilitarianism.

distinctions have been drawn between normative ethical theory and metaethics. There are many different forms that normative ethics and metaethics can take. Related issues can be divided into two broad categories: "first order" moral judgments and "second order" moral judgments. Roughly speaking, normative ethics is concerned with the former ones, focusing primarily on questions related to the fundamental matters about our moral lives, such as: What kinds of actions are right? Are there general principles or rules that we should follow? What is morally valuable? Metaethics is considered to be linked with the latter ones, mainly addressing questions *about* "first order" (normative) moral judgments. For instance, when certain moral judgments about right and wrong are being made, metaethical inquiries address questions as to the status of their moral claims; whether "first order" moral judgments can be correct or merely subjective; and whether it is rational to commit oneself to acting morally.

Robert Nozick's account of value examines issues involved in metaethics: He fruitfully engages in exploring the nature and status of ethics and offers an exploratory account of how there can possibly be objective values and ethical truths. His investigation also relates to issues in the area of normative ethics. In this regard, he provides viewpoints on how we should live by insisting that an unexamined life is not lived as fully as an examined one from a mature person's perspectives. This thesis will touch on issues in normative ethics; however, more emphasis will be placed on issues related to metaethics.

In the beginning of Part I, I will undertake two main tasks in order to pinpoint

Nozick's position on the objectivity of moral claims. The first task is to sketch out an overview of various moral points of view in metaethics. I will offer a broad characterization of metaethical positions and then fill out some of the detail of various positions in both anti-realism and realism by discussing issues regarding whether or not moral claims can be correct in the sense that they have independent objective true content.

The second task of Part I is to show how Nozick formulates an integrated picture of value within which he defends the claim that there is room for objective values. In other words, my primary concern in this part is to elaborate the standpoint that Nozick takes regarding what constitutes the objectivity of value. He delineates five formulations of our relation to value; namely, nihilism, realism (or platonism), idealism (or creationism), formationism (or romanticism), and realizationism. Nozick clearly favors the fifth one, realizationism, which conceives of objective values as partly mind-independent and partly mind-dependent. His realizational approach to value grounded in the fifth formulation makes room for a utilitarian reconstruction of his idea of value-as-organic-unity. In Part II, I will fully address this possibility by discussing the sense in which and the extent to which Nozick's account can accommodate utilitarian theories that incorporate his conception of value-as-organic-unity.

In proceedings with the second task of Part I, I will firstly present how Nozick frames his value theory by appealing to his discussion of the dimension of value and his notion of organic unity. Equipped with these, I will then examine the way in

which Nozick formulates his doctrine of value as degree of organic unity in *Philosophical Explanations*. The discussion is designed to explore how successfully the notion of (degree of) organic unity can function as a criterion of objective value. At the end of Part I, I will consider an alleged inadequacy of Nozick's treatment of value.

2. An Overview of Various Moral Points of View

This chapter is aimed at surveying a variety of moral points of view in metaethics. It is aimed, more specifically, at providing a brief historical overview of various kinds of positions in the moral realism/anti-realism debates on the issues of whether or not any moral claims can be correct. Broadly speaking, one type of moral realist position holds that there are moral facts in light of which our moral judgments are made true or false.[8] From this standpoint, beliefs that we are holding and moral claims that we are making are either true or false in accord with the way things really are and the extent to which we grasp the actual facts instead of groundless allegations. When it comes to accounting for the nature of moral facts; however, moral realists face a challenge: There is tremendous disagreement among realists with regards to what moral facts are. Some hold that moral facts are simply a kind of natural fact, whereas others reject the view that the existence of moral facts is independent of humans and insist that moral facts are non-natural. Nozick, in this respect, formulates his position termed "realizationism," according to which objective value is

[8] Another type of variation of moral realism is the one that refers not to "actual facts" but rather objective reasons. Michael Smith and Kantians, for example, belong to this camp. This variation of moral realism, however, is not going to be fully touched on in this thesis.

partly mind-dependent in terms of its existence, partly mind-independent in terms of its nature. The details of these viewpoints are going to be spelled out later.

Anti-realist positions, in contrast, insist that no appeal need be made to moral facts in the sense that moral judgments which we are making are not simply a report of moral facts. Many kinds of anti-realism question the idea of moral truth. At this point anti-realists largely agree that realists make a mistake in positing the idea that there exist moral facts in light of which some moral judgments are literally true. Let us turn now to an illustration of subjectivism, a version of anti-realism.

2.1 Anti-Realism: Subjectivism

Subjectivism regards moral claims as claims about a person's subjective points of view or feelings. Focusing just on the question of what it is for something to be good, Baruch Spinoza, for example, in his *Ethics* (III, Prop. IX, School) makes a claim that

> In no case do we strive for, wish, desire or long for anything because we deem it to be good, but on the contrary, we deem a thing to be good, because we strive for, wish, desire or long for it.[9]

This passage shows clearly that, on Spinoza's view, things are valuable simply because we desire them rather than because such things themselves possess values which are prior to our beliefs or independent of our desires. What is good, as Spinoza asserts, is largely upon what we desire or what we need.

Such a viewpoint as the one Spinoza maintains is seemingly in line with what we

[9] Spinoza, Baruch. *Ethics*, III, Prop. IX, School.

ordinarily think about the nature of moral judgments, since it is not hard to understand how our feelings or attitudes are involved in making moral claims. Adam Smith in his work *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* places himself in support of such a subjectivist camp and draws largely on elaborating how moral sentiments play an essential role in making moral claims. Unlike Spinoza,[10] Smith is concerned with the evolutionary process by which people's moral sentimental capacity develops and moral behavior produces.

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith argues that the sentiments are the basis of moral judgement and explains values or goods as grounded in sentiments. According to Smith, these sentiments are either proper or improper ones. To determine the propriety or impropriety of the sentiments, Smith at this point introduces the notion of an "impartial spectator" and relies heavily on this impartial spectator standpoint in describing how to judge the sentiments and how to adjust a person's own conduct so that the person sympathizes with the feelings motivating the actions of others. By taking up the spectator's standpoint and imagining how the impartial spectator would judge the propriety of an action, Smith maintains that "we can ever see what relates to ourselves in its proper shape and dimensions; or [that] we can ever make any proper comparison between our own interests and those of other

[10] It is also different from Alfred J. Ayer's position, in which he explicitly denies that there are any facts or objective moral truths that are prior to one's beliefs or attitudes. As A. J. Ayer puts it in his book *Language, Truth and Logic*, "We shall set ourselves to show that in so far as statements of value are significant, they are ordinary 'scientific' statements; and that in so far as they are not scientific, they are not in the literal sense significant, but are simply expressions of emotion which can be neither true nor false." (pp.102-3) To make the point clear, Ayer goes on to explain, "If a sentence makes no statement at all, there is obviously no sense in asking whether what it says is true or false. And we have seen that sentences which simply express moral judgments do not say anything. They are pure expressions of feeling and as such do not come under the category of truth and falsehood." (p. 108) (New York: Dover, 1952)

people."[11] Moral judgments thus arise from the propensity for sympathetic interaction between people.

Smith's idea of an impartial spectator assumes that every person is capable of making an impartial assessment not only by stepping outside of his or her own standpoint but also by adopting the impartial spectator's viewpoint that considers all aspects of the situation involved. Apparently, any moral attitude that each one takes, such as approval and disapproval, is inevitably to be associated with each person's emotional response and the appropriateness of the corresponding attitude, on Smith's account, is ultimately to be set by way of each person's understanding with regards to how the spectator would judge it.

At this point, one might wonder that Smith's viewpoint, to some extent supports a kind of relativism, which is another metaethical classification, since the differing moral attitude that people take might be attributable to the different understandings that people have and the various concerns that people have. Suppose that a person A takes a moral stance to express his or her approval of abortion since the person sees such an attitude as the spectator's standpoint in the similar circumstance. Let us assume that the person B is also from the same country C, but he has a Roman Catholic background. According to B, he would naturally be taken to express disapproval of the abortion. B holds that abortion is not morally acceptable by arguing that the spectator would undoubtedly judge the feelings by motivating the actions against the approval of abortion. There is no standard of right and wrong for

[11] Raphael, David D., & Macfie, Alec L. (eds). *Adam Smith: The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1982. p. 134. (Originally published: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.)

the case discussed here, since abortion, in this case, is wrong merely relative to B but not to A. Apparently, no basis is provided for moral judgments to be evaluated as objectively correct or incorrect. Neither the person A's nor the person B's concern can be regarded as more correct or reasonable than the other's. Hence it seems that Smith's account could be taken to imply that it is indeterminate whether abortion is morally acceptable in the country C.

2.2 Some Realist Alternatives

Let us turn now to the other camp, in which the type of subjectivism presented in the previous section is fundamentally challenged for insisting that moral values have their basis in mere sentiment. Views of this kind take a positive stance on the issue of whether people's moral judgments can be correct or cogent. More generally, the core of this camp holds that moral standards in making moral judgments are not up to the points of view that lie in what anyone believes. Instead, they are based upon something that is external to human emotional response or belief system. The aesthetic value of a painting, for example, cannot be diminished, no matter how many people may fail to apprehend its beauty.

Plato's position, for instance, is one of the extreme versions within the moral realist camp. In the *Republic*, Plato argues that value, the good, is an eternal object that has real existence located in a transcendent realm. Value, for Plato, is regarded as an object of knowledge. On this view, it is the knowledge of the good that guides our actions and validates our judgments. He claims that

> beauty itself and good itself and all the things that we thereby set down as many, reversing ourselves, we set down according to a single form of each, believing that there is but one, and call it "the being" of each....And we say that the many beautiful things and the rest are visible but not intelligible, while the forms are intelligible but not visible.[12]

The existence of value, much like the existence of other physical objects in reality, is distinct from how people conceive of or describe things with reference to their feelings. Both the nature and the existence of value, according to the Platonic form of realism, are completely independent of feelings, desires, or interests.

Foremost, Plato maintains that value is an immutable entity or absolute object. The insight that Plato gives into the examination of objective value is an extreme one in the sense that value is treated as an eternal thing which exists in a transcendent realm. Such a controversial perspective, eventually, makes the apprehension of value a mystery. To avoid the mystery, Thomas Nagel offers a standpoint which is quite different from Plato's, yet also a defense of a view of the objectivity of moral value.

Nagel provides a tentative viewpoint which incorporates the subject's point of view into an objective view of reality.[13] He sides with Plato in holding that moral value is objective insofar as it is to be discovered instead of to be invented or influenced by human thought. Yet, he disagrees with Plato at the point when he explicitly clarifies that "the view that values are real is not the view that they are real occult entities or properties, but that they are real values: that our claims about value

[12] Plato. *The Republic*. VI, p. 507. p. 180.

[13] In *Mortal Questions*, Nagel sees value as fragmented, with some values subjective, whilst he acknowledges values that are opaque from the objective point of view in *The View from Nowhere*. For him, value lies on a spectrum that moves from the subjective to the objective, with moral values falling on the objective side of the spectrum.

and what people have reason to do may be true or false independently of our beliefs and inclinations."[14]

From this perspective, any appeals to value or any moral judgments that are made can be expressed as true or false in a literal sense. There is an objective criterion at work in determining the correctness of moral claims. For example, the authority with respect to what is good and what constitutes the objectivity of value, according to Nagel, lie upon what sort of moral reason demands from an objective standpoint rather than upon what people are inclined toward.

Plato and Nagel exemplify two directions that a moral-realist metaethic can take, (1) towards good reasons for belief (Nagel), and (2) towards facts about the world (Plato). Brink's position, discussed below with reference to his conception of objective utilitarianism, is a naturalistic form of (2), showing how moral facts could be identified with physical microstructure or at least supervene upon such physical facts in such a manner as to justify token-identities of the form "Apartheid's wrongness was such-and-such an organization of matter in South Africa". This would be true even if the meaning of "Apartheid is wrong" is irreducibly different from the meaning of the assertion about matter.

Hare's metaethic partakes of both (1) and (2). Its emphasis on considerations of universalizability at the critical level is in the kantian spirit of (1), favouring satisfaction of this preference or that on the basis of whether its satisfaction is compatible with putting oneself in the shoes of the one whose preference is not

[14] Nagel, Thomas. *The View from Nowhere*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. p. 144.

satisfied. But Hare's choice of preference satisfaction as the "utile" to be maximized is in the platonic spirit of (2), identifying what is valuable with a naturalistic fact (satisfied preference) rather than a transcendent fact (Plato's world of Forms).

3. Nozick's Account of Value as Degree of Organic Unity

Philosophical Explanations is an effort to redraw the picture of value which has been framed. Nozick, in the introduction of this book, claims that he does not take himself to be following the common philosophical direction in which one philosophical inquiry is built upon another in the course of philosophical quest. He caricatures this process as producing a tall tottering tower. Nozick at this point vividly states:

> Philosophers often seek to deduce their total view from a few basic principles, showing how all follows from their intuitively based axioms. The rest of the philosophy then strikes readers as depending upon these principles. One brick is piled upon another to produce a tall philosophical tower, one brick wide. When the bottom brick crumbles or is removed, all topples, burying even those insights that were independent of the starting point.[15]

The above quoted passage is fairly self-explanatory in the sense that it serves to explicate that Nozick's position in regards to moral knowledge is explicitly non-foundational. Especially noteworthy at this point is the following passage, in which Nozick sketches a Parthenon structure to serve as a model for philosophical work. He writes:

> Instead of the tottering tower, I suggest that our model be the Parthenon. First we emplace our separate philosophical insights, column by column;

[15] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 3.

> afterwards, we unite and unify them under an overarching roof of general principles or themes. When the philosophical structure crumbles somewhat, as we should expect on inductive grounds, something of interest and beauty remains standing. Still preserved are some insights, the separate columns, some balanced relations, and the wistful look of a grander unity eroded by misfortunes or natural processes.[16]

Nozick is sufficiently concerned about the Parthenon model and the explanatory methodology throughout all of his philosophical explorations. In the section titled "Nihilism, Realism, Idealism, Romanticism, and Realizationism," Nozick readily undertakes the task of identifying what he calls "five possibilities about our relationship to value"[17] and formulates a type of realizational account of how value comes into existence as one of possible conjectures. He tentatively approaches the issue by explaining what underpins the realizationist viewpoint rather than by proving how the other four possible positions about value are false. The discussion of the realizationist position that Nozick provides is a clear exposition of his methodological approach and also conforms to the Parthenon model that I have just described. As he puts it:

> My concern is not to argue that these views [the other four possibilities] are false, to convince their proponents they are mistaken. The task, rather, is to explain how there can be objective values and ethical truths, to formulate a conception or picture within which there is room for these.[18]

In Nozick's account, the first possibility with regards to our understanding of the basis of value is called *nihilism*. This is the view that there are no moral facts or fundamental values. Nihilists, who defend this position, typically insist that neither

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[16] Ibid. p. 3.
[17] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. pp. 555-558.
[18] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 400.

values nor any true ought statements exist and therefore maintain that moral requirements are illusory.

This position is significantly different from the other four possible positions, all of which agree on the point that values do exist regardless of whether or not their existence and/or character is dependent on us. These positions are termed *realism (or Platonism)*, *idealism (or creationism)*, *formationism (or romanticism)*, and *realizationism*, respectively. The second position maintains that both the existence and character of values are independent of us, not subject to our choices or attitudes; whereas "variants of positions 3-5," as Nozick notes, "might hold that the existence or character of values stems from us or our activities."[19] For the third, fourth, and fifth positions, Nozick notices that our relationship to values "is not dependent upon our voluntary choices, instead arising from something we must do, some necessity of our natures."[20]

Of all the possible positions which have been delineated, Nozick favors the fifth position about values, which is called *realizationism*, and explicitly asserts that "it is a coherent position, and so a possible structure for value theory."[21] This last position, according to Nozick, is that "we choose or determine that there be values, that they exist, but their character is independent of us."[22] He illustrates the features[23] of this position by drawing a parallel with the realizationist view of mathematical entities and Karl Popper's man-made realm ("the third world") of abstract entities.

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[19] Ibid. p. 556.
[20] Ibid. p. 556.
[21] Ibid. p.557.
[22] Ibid. p. 555.
[23] This refers to the dependent existence but independent character of value.

Let us take mathematical entities as an illuminating example or an indication to answer the puzzle of why the "values" that Nozick construes are partly mind-dependent and partly mind-independent. Natural numbers in mathematics, for example, depend ultimately upon the human mind in order to exist. When we bring natural numbers into existence, we do not also construct relationships among them. In addition, when it comes to large finite numbers or infinite sets of numbers, there is no way to grasp their relationships by counting each number. The whole process of the Calculus, for instance, requires at least a grasp of quantitative relationships, a rigorous mathematical reasoning, and an extensive use of numerical and geometrical mathematical theorems. These are accessible to us, but are not constructed by us. Similarly, the construal of values that Nozick provides also possesses the features of being partly mind-dependent and partly mind-independent.

Inspired from the terminology of logicians in model theory, where models are regarded as realizations of abstract structures, Nozick explicitly suggests that "we view values similarly, as abstract structures."[24] In line with this, he claims that "the things having a particular value are those things or systems that are realizations of that (value) structure: the things with value are models of the value."[25]

In order to present a clear exposition, Nozick in this respect stresses that the suggestion for abstractly modeling the structure of value is not to deny the importance of realizing values in the world. Rather, the analogy with model theory makes his realizational account of how we are theorizing value more desirable than any other

[24] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 424.
[25] Ibid. p. 424.

realizable alternative. This is because structural relationships embrace a great diversity in terms of moral possibilities in realizing the same value and contribute significantly to both the degree of unification and the degree of diversity of the things or systems. As Nozick himself explicitly puts it:

> When an abstract structure is realized, the relationship of realization brings along with it isomorphism, a tight unifying relationship. This isomorphism also holds among the several realizations of the same value, unifying them, so it is valuable that values be realized multiply.[26]

To explicate this, Nozick brings in a discussion of the value of a phonograph record and the value of a musical performance that the phonograph record records. A musical performance and its recording may incontrovertibly be viewed as isomorphic: They possess a similar structure or appearance in terms of contoured grooves and sounds, but they are of different ancestry or category. Nozick in this respect finds it at least plausible that

> Isomorphism can take us from one realm where relations yield a high degree of unifiedness, to another realm where the corresponding relations under the isomorphism need not be salient or significantly unifying; there, different relations may perform the important unifications.[27]

He then elaborates the above observation by saying that

> The musical relations among tones may yield a high degree of unification and thus of organic unity in the musical realm, whereas the "corresponding" spatial relations exhibited by the grooves do not give the record an especially high degree of organic unity as a physical object, relative to the unifying relations appropriate and salient in the realm of physical objects.[28]

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[26] Ibid. p. 425.
[27] Ibid. p. 425.
[28] Ibid. p. 425.

Nozick's analysis appears to grant that pluralism of values is theoretically possible. In the latter section "Pluralism and Creativity," he is explicit in claiming the possibility of an "ineradicable plurality of values," since there may be values which are incompatible. Nozick at this point cautions that "these diverse values cannot be (tightly) unified, that there are ineradicable conflicts, tensions, needs for tradeoffs, and so on."[29]

On the basis of the preceding considerations, Nozick precludes the possibility of simply utilizing "one uniquely correct objective ranking of [values], one optimal (feasible) mix of them, one fixed desirable schedule of tradeoffs among them"[30] to the diverse circumstances of each person's life. At this point he claims that "the individual values themselves are objective"[31] and goes on to suggest that each individual should formulate his/her own "package of value realization," as, according to Nozick, "[this package] can pattern and unify the diverse values it realizes."[32]

This suggestion might seem to lead to prospects for individuality in the way values are being realized. Nozick in this respect admits reluctantly that his suggestion does leave room for individuality. It is important to note that there is actually some significance to be touched on here. Nozick's strategy is to advocate that the pluralist nature of values irrefutably neglects "the threat that the objectivity of values might appear to pose to individuality."[33] He is explicit that "[t]here is some open range within whatever partial rankings of value are objectively correct."

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[29] Ibid. p. 447.
[30] Ibid. p. 448.
[31] Ibid. p. 448.
[32] Ibid. p. 447.
[33] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 448.

Individuality, for Nozick, "is expressed in the interstices of the objective rankings of value, in the particular unified patterning chosen and lived."[34]

The nature of value as (degree of) organic unity, according to Nozick, has an affinity to the pluralist character of values. Nozick reinforces this idea in his discussion of creativity in the same section where he points out that "[w]ithin the view of value as organic unity, there is room for the creation of new values: there is room for new and even radically different organic unities."[35]

In what follows, I will present the picture of value as degree of organic unity that Nozick maintains. As we will see, Nozick is inclined to employ the scalar notion of degree of organic unity in elaborating his version of objectivity, and proposes to construe organic unity as a criterion of objective value. Organic unity, in Nozick's view, consists in a unified whole which integrates diverse elements. He insists that it is degree of organic unity that underpins our judgments of intrinsic value across various realms. At this point, strictly speaking, what ties these viewpoints together is the assumption that (degree of) organic unity is the basic dimension of intrinsic value. I am going to proceed by attempting to show the degree to which Nozick takes his account of organic unity to be compatible with the value dimension.

3.1 The Dimension of Value in Nozick's Sense

The expository line that Nozick in fact takes in regards to his notion of value[36] is

[34] Ibid. p. 448.
[35] Ibid. p. 449.
[36] It is important to note here that the notion of value that Nozick wishes to investigate is intrinsic value. Unlike instrumental value, which involves acting as a means to something else that is valuable, intrinsic value is valuable in itself. In other words, intrinsic value is basic in the sense that its existence does not rely on the existence of other kinds of value. To say that some things are intrinsically valuable, in this respect, is to say that the things

captured in his construction of the 48-dimension "matrix of reality," where he posits his widest possible list of constituents of values. In *The Examined Life*, he is inclined to unpack the various dimensions by structuring his list of value through the construction of a matrix which consists of the forty-eight dimensions of evaluative goodness within reality. Part of this tentative sketch of value is the dimension of value-as-organic-unity. His matrix of reality, in which the growing list[37] of evaluative dimensions resides, presents an organically unified structure in such a manner that it embodies "the desire that the various dimensions of reality be unified and illuminatingly interrelated, that the realm of reality exhibit its own organic unity."[38]

It might be tempting to regard this well-structured matrix as a final completed table of reality encompassing all dimensions; however, this does not seem to be the case for Nozick. Note that Nozick's construction of the matrix presupposes his personal rankings of intrinsic value, where he "place[s] people higher in intrinsic value than animals which are higher than plants which are higher than rocks."[39] In this regard, it needs to be emphasized here that Nozick does not hold his value ranking rigidly, nor does he try to expel the possibilities for other potential alternative

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have a value of their own, instead of referring to the value of others.

[37] Nozick in Chapter 16 "Importance and Weight" intends to elaborate dimensions of reality by arranging them in a table, initially including four evaluative dimensions—value, meaning, importance, and weight. He later in Chapter 17 "The Matrix of Reality" strives to enlarge the number of dimensional criteria by expanding the list from the initial four to forty-eight. This wide-ranging list contains the following evaluative dimensions ("take a deep breath," as Nozick humorously suggests): "value, meaning, importance, weight, depth, amplitude, intensity, height, vividness, richness, wholeness, beauty, truth, goodness, fulfillment, energy, autonomy, individuality, vitality, creativity, focus, purpose, development, serenity, holiness, perfection, expressiveness, authenticity, freedom, infinitude, enduringness, eternity, wisdom, understanding, life, nobility, play, grandeur, greatness, radiance, integrity, personality, loftiness, idealness, transcendence, growth, novelty, expansiveness, originality, purity, simplicity, preciousness, significance, vastness, profundity, integration, harmony, flourishing, power, and destiny." (TEL, p. 182.)

[38] Nozick, Robert. *The Examined Life: philosophical meditations.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989. p. 184.

[39] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations.* Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 415.

value rankings.

As such, the line that Nozick is following is one that includes the need to admit the possibilities of certain alternative rankings. In line with this, Nozick suggests to treat his construction in terms of the 48-dimension matrix of reality as "a symbolic representation of the unity within reality,"[40] regardless "whether or not it is an accurate theory of that unity."[41] Nozick's matrix, in this sense, is introduced as a highly speculative and tentative conjecture without providing much in the way of argument. His whole discussion as to the dimensions of reality actually plays an illuminative role to invite each of us to make our own matrix. In Chapter 18 "Darkness and Light" of *The Examined Life*, Nozick explicitly expresses this regard at the point where he stresses that "we each contemplate and live the widest and best-structured matrix we've been able to understand thus far."[42]

So far we have already seen Nozick's thoughts on value in general by reference to his reflections on the varying dimensions of reality. In what follows I will move on to present his explanatory account of value, where he is inclined to tentatively construe value as (degree of) organic unity in particular. This leads us to discuss his views of value in a narrow sense.

Throughout his discussion, Nozick proposes to regard intrinsic value as organic unity, namely "unity in diversity." To make this possible, he sketches out a dimension D and addresses that this particular dimension D, which underlies all or

[40] Nozick, Robert. *The Examined Life: philosophical meditations*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989. p. 184.
[41] Ibid. pp. 184-5.
[42] Ibid. p. 211.

most of our considered judgments of intrinsic value, is the basic dimension of value.[43] In the section entitled "Conditions on Value and Disvalue," Nozick adds that "[o]nly that dimension D can be (the dimension underlying) value, for only it and nothing else satisfies all of the constitutive conditions on value. Given that there is (a dimension of) value, it has to be that dimension D."[44] Nozick's insistence here suggests that the intrinsic value dimension D (viz. degree of organic unity) should be treated as a unique candidate (excluding all other dimensions) for constituting value.

To uncover the relationship between dimension D and the notion of value, Nozick formulates a list of constitutive conditions on being a basic dimension of intrinsic value, which dimension D must satisfy. The first one that Nozick addresses is called "formal ordering condition":

> Value establishes an ordering (partial or complete) over things, actions, systems, states of affairs, and so on, so any dimension that is to be the basic dimension of intrinsic value also must establish such an ordering. This condition rules out as value those properties that do not establish any ordering at all, and those dimensions that do not establish an ordering over an extensive enough field; for example, the ordering dimension of height applies to things and objects, but not to actions or states of affairs.[45]

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[43] At this point Nozick is explicit that it is not possible for the constructed particular dimension D to underpin all variation in intrinsic value. He acknowledges that at least 10% (or up to of the variance in intrinsic value cannot be explained by the basic dimension D. In this respect, his remark in fact is that "we should be more than happy if (partialing out the effects of the particular values) the degree of organic unity accounted for 90 percent of the variance in intrinsic value. (Indeed, an explanatory factor that accounted for 60 percent of the variance would be quite significant as a start toward theory.)" (Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 419.) This particular percentage of variation in intrinsic value indicates what Nozick takes to be a possible target that the account of value as organic unity can reach. The basic dimension D of intrinsic value, for Nozick, is (degree of) organic unity. Also, the point here repeatedly reinforces Nozick's "confessional" claims about the extent to which the particular dimension D underlies his personal ranking of intrinsic value. He concedes that much of the line as to the rank ordering in value is vague, though there are some parts which are distinctive and well-defined. As such, instead of trying to burden the proposed dimension by claiming that the dimension D underpins "a very sharp ranking of everything," Nozick recommends that the intrinsic value dimension D yields the ranking roughly so that it would be plausible to view the dimension D as an explanatory dimension to account for value. As a result, the proposed dimension D "will not favor Flaubert over Tolstoy" as one of his examples points out. (Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. pp. 415-6.)

[44] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 441.

[45] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 429.

At this point, Nozick argues that a dimension D can possibly be the basic dimension of intrinsic value in the sense that the rank ordering generated by the particular dimension D is roughly in accordance with the rank ordering in value.

Built upon this formal condition, Nozick introduces a substantive condition, discussing such questions as what the function of values is for us, what relationship we are to have with values. His appeal to this line of inquiry is stated clearly in the following passage:

> Values are to be brought about, maintained, saved from destruction, prized, and valued (where this last is some descriptive term of psychology plus the theory of action). When no activity of ours can affect the value, value is to be contemplated and appreciated. That is what the function of value is in our lives, to be pursued, maintained, contemplated, valued.[46]

Nozick explicitly remarks that the function of values is to value the things which possess them. Apparently, valuing values, for Nozick, represents a type of appropriate relationship with values because valuing value, in Nozick's terms, is itself intrinsically valuable.

On the basis of the above two conditions, Nozick goes on to provide an additional constitutive condition in order to narrow his appeal down to explore the existence of values and of the basic dimension D. In the following passage, he states clearly that the basic dimension D of (intrinsic) value is such that

> (a) the situation of there being something with a high degree of value along D is of value;
> (b) when C1, ..., Cn are the constitutive conditions (of the sort we are listing) on value (other than this very condition?) then it is valuable (according to dimension D) that there be some dimension that satisfies these

[46] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 429.

conditions.[47]

3.2 The Notion of Degree of Organic Unity

Along with the formulation of conditions on the dimension of intrinsic value deployed in the above exploration, Nozick also extends the analysis of the nature of value in the direction of what he calls "organic unity." In this way, he interrogates the relationship between (degree of) organic unity and degrees of intrinsic value and proposes a scheme for understanding degree of organic unity as the basic dimension of intrinsic value. To assess this understanding fully in the next section, it might be worthwhile to first look at what organic unity means. The material which displays organic unity is a united form wherein the diverse elements of material are integrated and unified in a tight way. Much of what follows in this section will focus on unpacking the key feature of the notion of (degree of) organic unity.

The term "organic unity" is originally derived from a biological definition; that is, "wholes whose parts are related and homeostatically regulated in intricate and complicated ways [are] unified through time despite changes in the parts."[48] G. E. Moore, who also adopts the conception of organic unity, argued that the value of a whole is greater than that of the sum of its parts, and the parts themselves do not necessarily have to be intrinsically valuable in order for the whole to have value. Nozick at this point agrees with Moore by claiming that "[organic] unities can be built up out of elements which do not themselves have organic unity; there can be unified

[47] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 435.
[48] Ibid. p. 416.

'molecules' without there being organically unified 'subatomic particles.'"[49]

In contradistinction from Moore, Nozick notices that there is a difference between the whole and the sum of its parts, and goes on to uncover that "a whole need not be the sum of its parts."[50] Nozick's conception of organic unity does not simply refer to a collection which is being treated merely as an aggregate. Nozick in his account clearly points this out by claiming that "an organic unity does something to maintain the integrity and continuance of the whole, unlike a heap which just lies there like a lump."[51] He distinguishes the notion of a unity from that of a whole. More precisely, he makes an explicit distinction between a whole and a unity by remarking that "something is a whole if its parts can be replaced; something is [a] unity if its parts must stay in certain relations for the entity to continue to exist."[52] As regards the unity relations, he asserts that "the tighter the relations [are], the greater the unity."[53]

Organic unity, in Nozick's account, however, is not just about unity. Indeed, this notion involves both unity and diversity. At the beginning of his book *Philosophical Explanations*, Nozick briefly touches on the idea of organic unity in his discussion of classification and entification. For instance, the concept of a person brings together a diversity of elements at a time (the various limbs, the sensory modalities at work, etc.) and a diversity of elements through time (the many stages of the body's aging, the many stages of mental development, etc.). The unification of this diversity has

[49] Nozick, Robert. *The Examined Life: philosophical meditations*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989. p. 164.
[50] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 101.
[51] Ibid. p. 100.
[52] Ibid. p. 103.
[53] Ibid. p. 103.

more value in Nozick's sense than, say, a temporal slice of personhood lasting 60 seconds, or a spatial slice limited to the cradle-to-grave nose. More specifically, in his remarks about how things are to be grouped together, Nozick associates classification and entification with the degrees of organic unity and explicitly claims that the former maximizes the sum of the latter. As Nozick puts it, "an informative classification brings together a diversity that it unifies while not bringing together such a great diversity that it doesn't get significantly unified."[54]

Closely related, Thomas Hurka endorses this unity-in-diversity structure when he gives a detailed sketch of his Aristotelian theory of human nature in *Perfectionism*. It is noteworthy that Hurka, in the section entitled "Unity and Complexity," utilizes the feature of unity-in-diversity to develop an account of his Aristotelian ideal, more specifically, to calculate substantial elements, measure hierarchical dominance, and illustrate the overall structure of a unified life. He is explicit that the Aristotelian ideal that he intends to establish is not just about unity but also involves diversity. Hurka at this point claims that "if these [diverse substantial] elements are counted in kinds that can include each other (9.2.2), the hierarchy has more value the greater its variety. In its best formulation, the Aristotelian ideal is not unity but unity-in-diversity, or the bringing of many contrasting elements into one life structure."[55] Here Hurka even makes a very specific note saying that "[w]hen it is calculated using kinds that can include each other, dominance measures what is

[54] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 86.
[55] Hurka, Thomas. *Perfectionism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. p. 122.

sometimes called 'organic unity.'"[56]

Clearly, for Nozick, organic unity is a unity in diversity, which aims to "tightly unif[y] (in [an] explanatory fashion) diverse and apparently disparate data or phenomena, via its tightly unifying relationships."[57] He attempts to articulate how the relationship is built up by remarking as follows

> Holding fixed the degree of unifiedness of the material, the degree of organic unity varies directly with the degree of diversity of that material being unified. Holding fixed the degree of diversity of the material, the degree of organic unity varies directly with the degree of unifiedness (induced) in that material. The more diverse the material, however, the harder it is to unify it to a given degree.[58]

As formulated, being a unity in diversity, according to Nozick, involves an interactive relation between the degree of unifiedness and the degree of diversity. His account of how the degree of organic unity yields in accordance with the degree of unifiedness and diversity leads to the conclusion that the more diversity an entity consists of under a tighter unity, the higher the degree of organic unity it contains.[59]

So stated, in calling attention to (degree of) organic unity as the promising candidate for being (the basic dimension of intrinsic) value, and in explaining the unity-in-diversity structure that embodied in the notion of organic unity, Nozick has highlighted the essential role of organic unity for value. The dimension "degree of organic unity," as Nozick puts it, "gives much contoured structure for the responses to value to latch onto."[60] My primary goal in the following section will be to bring

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[56] Ibid. p. 203.
[57] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 417.
[58] Ibid. p. 416.
[59] Ibid. p. 416.
[60] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 441.

together the discussion of section 3.2 back in contact with the concerns raised in section 3.1, aiming to provide a detailed sketch of Nozick's account of objective value. I will devote most of my attention to clarifying the underpinnings of his account of value as (degree of) organic unity.

Before turning to other matters, it is worth pausing here to briefly discuss skepticism about the account of organic unity. It seems most likely that skeptics might raise objections against this account either by questioning objective value (qua realizationism) or by questioning organic unity as the criterion of value. Neither of them, however, is very appealing. The former objection to Nozick's account is a non-starter in the absence of an account of organic unity that does not require his objectivism, for his discussion of organic unity is integrated with this theory of objective value. The skeptics have to bear this integration clearly in mind in considering Nozick's discussion of value as organic unity. As for the latter objection, the skeptics can only forcefully raise doubts for Nozick's account of organic unity if they have an alternative criterion (or criteria) available in hand. My approach is more positive than the skeptic's. I show how the conception of value-as-organic-unity can be "ported" to utilitarian theoretical underpinnings, sacrificing Nozick's realizationist account of objectivity in favour of Hare's conception of objectivity as universalizability or Brink's distinctive moral realism that identifies moral facts with physical microstructure. Each migration to utilitarianism has advantages and drawbacks. Hare's preference-satisfaction utilitarianism is tough-minded and empirically oriented about value-as-organic-unity, but it puts such

value at empirical risk by making it a strict function of considered preference as maximized from the critical level of his theory. By contrast, Brink's utilitarianism can offer a kind of guarantee that organic unity will not succumb to this risk, by including it in a list of intrinsic goods that contribute to objective welfare in his sense, which is to be maximized. I do not minimize the fact that sacrificing Nozick's realizationism is serious surgery that severs the mentioned integration, but it is important that his account of value as organic unity can survive it.

3.3 Value as Degree of Organic Unity

So far the discussion in the previous section has been restricted to elucidating Nozick's conception of organic unity. As regards its relation to value, Nozick observes that people tend to confer value on entities according to their degree of organic unity and holds that organic unity is "the common strand [to] of value across different realms."[61] To give an explanation of his observation demands a close examination of the link between value and organic unity. Nozick is explicit that the relationship of (degree of) organic unity to intrinsic value exists in an entity. In this respect, he remarks that "the dimension degree of organic unity seems to capture our notion of (degree of intrinsic) value."[62] More precisely, he proposes that degree of organic unity is the basic dimension of intrinsic value in the sense that it underlies most of our judgments of intrinsic value. My main concern in this section is to examine his proposal more closely, in the hope of illustrating his version of value

[61] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 418.
[62] Ibid. p. 418.

theory.

Nozick makes explicit his view of the relationship between organic unity and value by stating that "values are organic unities; something is intrinsically valuable in accordance with its degree of organic unity."[63] As remarked in the last section, he argues that intrinsic value lies in the degree of organic unity within an entity, which consists of both the degree of unity and the degree of diversity in the entity. The degree of unity, in Nozick's view, is relative to a set of unifying relations, whereas the way to measure the degree of diversity is relative to a set of dimensions in which the components of the materials could be either different or similar. More to the point, Nozick articulates how the interactive relation between the degree of diversity and the degree of unifiedness can be cashed out. Precisely, he elucidates the interaction by saying that "rather than merely being a unity that somehow includes that diversity, it unifies it qua that diversity. The unifying relations, given their nature and content, are related to the characteristics of the diverse components, and latch onto those characteristics in a particular way."[64]

Nozick considers a work of music as an example to further elaborate his view of value as (degree of) organic unity. In analyzing his example, Nozick observes that people generally feel a close connection between music and value and also uncovers that people tend to confer a particular value on a musical performance. With this observation in hand, Nozick sets out his explanatory account of value as (degree of) organic unity by referring to the musical relations among various tones and sounds

[63] Ibid. p. 446.
[64] Ibid. pp. 426-7.

where different relations "yield a high degree of unification and thus of organic unity in the musical realm."[65] He further remarks that "relationships are saliently weighted so as to contribute to the degree of unification of the material, and also of the content that gets unified, its degree of diversity (where the degree of organic unity is a function both of the degree of diversity and the degree of unifiedness)."[66] As indicated above, Nozick stresses that the nature of the unifying relationships that occur among the diverse materials within an entity contributes significantly in yielding the degree of organic unity.

Clearly, Nozick's suggestion is that intrinsic value is (degree of) organic unity. He also points out that a whole itself actually exemplifies the process of unity in diversity and that organic unity can be achieved at that level. In order to make this point clear, he uses an analogy with aesthetics by saying that "a painter creates a painting which is an organic unity. In addition, there is the particular unifying relation between the painter, the painting, and its viewer, other relations between this painting and previous ones, and so on."[67] Simon A. Hailwood, in his book *Exploring Nozick: Beyond Anarchy, State and Utopia* further develops the discussion of this view by claiming that "many wholes may be extremely complex, made up of parts which are themselves unities of diversity, the parts of which again are unified wholes and so on."[68]

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[65] Ibid. p. 425.
[66] Ibid. p. 426.
[67] Ibid. p.421.
[68] Hailwood, Simon A. *Exploring Nozick: Beyond Anarchy, State and Utopia*. Avebury: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 1996. p. 143.

4. Further Elaboration on Nozick's Treatment of Value

Reflecting upon the above, we see that Nozick makes an underlying assumption in the course of his investigation. It is the assumption that the degree of organic unity must be the basic dimension of intrinsic values and that this unity underlies our judgments of intrinsic values. What people think is valuable are things that consist of diverse yet unified structures. In this respect, Nozick suggests viewing values as abstract structures[69]. As he puts it, "the things having a particular value are those things or systems that are realizations of that (value) structure: the things with value are models of the value."[70]

Nozick also stresses that "organic unity is the common strand to value across different realm[s]."[71] His assumption that "the degree of organic unity is the basic dimension of intrinsic value, accounting for almost all differences in intrinsic value"[72] can be recognized in his suggestion that the notion of organic unity is a unity in diversity across different realms. Nozick uses an example of identifying the ranking of organisms in the biological realm to elaborate his viewpoint. He states that higher animals, for biologists, are identified as those whose functions and behaviors exhibit complicated and tight patternings. Lower animals, on the other hand, according to the biological classification, are those whose systems and structures are displayed in rather simple ways. It is no wonder higher animals, such as wolves, dogs, and

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[69] Inspired by the terminology of logicians in model theory, Nozick suggests a similar approach to treat values. As he puts it, "I suggest we follow the terminology of logicians in model theory. Models are realizations of abstract structures; the elements of the model correspond to the nodes of the structure, while the relationships among these elements correspond to the structural relations of the abstract structure. A model of a structure fits the structure, and instantiates it." (Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 424.)

[70] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 424.

[71] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 418.

[72] Ibid. p. 418.

rabbits, generally seem more valuable to us than animals whose structures are simple. Apparently, in this respect, animals with less diversity in their structures or systems display limited functioning and less degree of organic unity. Nozick at this point teases out that "ranking of organisms in accordance with degree of organic unity matches our value ranking in them, with people above other animals above plants above rocks."[73]

Nozick then turns to ask whether we can compare the degrees of organic unity of things from different realms, and to what extent the degrees of organic unity of things can plausibly provide an account of the variance in intrinsic value. As regards the latter, he makes his viewpoint explicit by stating that it is impossible for degree of organic unity to underpin all variation in intrinsic value. His discussion aims to clarify that "the degree of organic unity accounted for 90 percent[74] of the variance in intrinsic value."[75] Concerning the former, Nozick holds that we cannot make any comparison among the degrees of organic unity of things from different realms as there is no value ranking across realms and we cannot make comparisons within realms due to the incommensurability of intrinsic values. He expands his remarks on the incomparability of the degrees of organic unity as follows:

> often we will not be able to compare either the degrees of diversity of collections of materials from different realms, or the degrees of unifiedness produced by different relationships from different realms. Hence, often we will not be able to compare the degrees of organic unity of things from different realms. If (as I believe) degree of organic unity is the basic

[73] Ibid. p. 417.
[74] Indeed, Nozick at this point notes that "an explanatory factor that accounted for 60 percent of the variance would be quite significant as a start toward theory." (Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 419.)
[75] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 419.

dimension of intrinsic value, then some things from different realms will be incomparable in value.[76]

His remarks bring out two concerns. The first one concerns the extent to which the proportion between the degree of diversity and the degree of unity can be properly measured. The second one questions how much room Nozick's account leaves for those objects that fail to unify appropriately or whose unification itself is essentially destructive. Hailwood, for instance, points these concerns out and provides examples of bad art or oppressive modes of social unity as cases where diversity is ignored or overlooked rather than unified appropriately or inappropriately.

Nozick offers a defense of his construal of value as organic unity. If we are to accept his claim that the purpose of unity accommodates the realization of organic unity, we would be able to reply to those concerns by pointing out a distinction between an organic unity and a merely organized unity. Using the example of concentration camps, Nozick explains that an entity will not necessarily turn out to be intrinsically valuable even though it might apparently exhibit itself as a highly organized unity, because it aims at destroying organic unity. This point is discussed further below.

This account of the distinction between organic unity and organized unity turns attention to the idea of disvalue. In his discussion, Nozick does not simply formulate "disvalue" as a zero degree of unity or the absence of value; rather, he interprets it as a counterforce of value, that is, a negative element that is opposite to both value and organic unity. With this interpretation in mind, Nozick goes on to explain how to

[76] Ibid. p. 419.

balance value and disvalue, as well as how to overcome disharmony and disunity on the assumption that organic unity is the basic dimension of value.

Nozick's conception of organic unity does not capture every platitude that has been associated with that notion. For instance, he adds an explicit footnote, disavowing that "writers on organic unity in art often assert that no part of an organic unity can be removed or changed without significantly altering the whole."[77] Also, in the same footnote, Nozick rejects "the primacy of formal values in literature, which led Henry James (in his preface to *The Tragic Muse*) to condemn *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* as 'large loose baggy monsters'."[78] He then explicates his standpoint by stating that

> The standard of "unity in diversity", as we interpret it, will not favor Flaubert over Tolstoy; the magnitude and importance of the themes of the work, and the diversity these themes unify, will be part of the total diversity unified. The diversity unified by a work needn't all be present in the work, as shown by Picasso line drawings.[79]

Part II: A Utilitarian Framework for Nozick's Theory of Value

The central purpose at Part I has been focused on exploring Nozick's treatment of value, especially, on elaborating his notion of intrinsic value, his idea of organic unity, and his account of the doctrine of value as (degree of) organic unity. There are various ways in which Nozick's position can be interpreted. My aim in Part II, briefly speaking, is to try to work out a utilitarian interpretation of Nozick's viewpoint,

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[77] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 416.
[78] Ibid. p. 416.
[79] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 416.

and to show that Nozick's value theory in itself is consistent with the adoption of such an interpretation, even though Nozick was not a utilitarian. As a result, this proposal may, indeed, make room for a plausible interpretation of Nozick's value theory which does not render the account of organic unity mythical or mysterious and which can lead to an amendment of the inadequacies in Nozick's treatment of value.

5. Mackie's Critique: A Defect of the Status of Objective Value

As discussed in Part I, Nozick construes organic unity as the central notion in his account of value and regards the dimension degree of organic unity as the basic dimension of intrinsic value. In his investigation of the nature of value, Nozick engages with the question of how there can be objective value. In this respect, Nozick's position accords with the view that the status of moral value is objective in the sense that moral judgments exhibit an objective truth of value rather than a matter of opinion, feeling, desire, or cultural custom.

In what follows, I discuss a critique raised by J. L. Mackie. More specifically, I show that Mackie in his critique acknowledges that many people typically tend to regard the status of moral value as objective, but he clearly states that it is an error to think so because, he argues, there is certainly no objective value. As stated in his account, Mackie casts doubt on the status of moral value as "objective" and condemns objectivism for being obscure or mysterious in the sense that it does not explain how a moral fact or judgment could be action-guiding.

More precisely, in *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Mackie attacks the view of

objectivity by remarking that

> If there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe. Correspondingly, if we were aware of them, it would have to be by some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, utterly different from our ordinary ways of knowing everything else.[80]

From this perspective, there would seem to be no firm ground for objective values. In order to give a closer scrutiny of the view, Mackie goes on to claim that

> the denial of objective values will have to be put forward ... as an "error theory," a theory that although most people in making moral judgments implicitly claim, among other things, to be pointing to something objectively prescriptive, these claims are all false.[81]

As indicated, Mackie acknowledges that the moral judgments that people make can be both coherent and sufficient to move people to act. Yet these judgments are not true if the moral judgments do not embody objective values. He clarifies his position claiming that "ordinary moral judgments include a claim to objectivity, an assumption that there are objective values in just the sense in which I am concerned to deny this."[82] If there were objective value properties such as goodness, rightness, and so on, Mackie argues that these would be "qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe."[83] The objectivity of values, in Mackie's view, can be regarded only as the "queerness" of values. They have to depend upon attitudes, desires, feelings or concerns that people have in order to motivate people to act.

Mackie's critique creates a false dilemma between values as written into the fabric

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[80] Mackie, John. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. New York: Harmondsworth, 1977. p. 38.
[81] Ibid. p. 35.
[82] Ibid. p. 35.
[83] Ibid. p. 38.

of the universe, on the one hand, and on the other hand values as depending on "human preferences, choices, attitudes, commitments, or other psychological states."[84] His critique of objectivity may have force against Platonism about value, which was one of his main targets. But Nozick's realizationism is significantly different and bolstered by a persuasive analogy to mathematics. For Nozick, as stated, the existence of value is dependent upon our preferences and choices, whereas its character is independent of us. He at this point explicitly contends that "we choose that there be value but do not choose its character."[85] So construed, objectivity in Nozick's sense is partly mind-dependent, partly mind-independent. To make sense of his treatment of values, Nozick elaborates his realizationist construal by drawing on an analogy to a realizationist view of mathematical entities, as, for example, in Popper's "third world" of abstract entities. A comparable feature then emerges insofar as they similarly depend on us for their existence but not their nature. In this way, apparently, Nozick's realizationism renders the ontological status of values no more "queer" than mathematical entities.

Doubts may linger. Tough-minded philosophers of a utilitarian stripe might feel sympathetic towards the conception of organic unity from Nozick's realizationism and imbed it in considerations about preference satisfaction, as in the theory to which I now turn.

6. Hare's Approach: Two Levels of Moral Thinking

[84] Nozick, Robert. Philosophical Explanations. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 555.
[85] Ibid. p. 558.

I begin by providing a short summary of Hare's investigation of two levels of moral thinking: the intuitive level and the critical level. I shall then be mainly concerned with the explication of these levels that Hare gives in *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method and Point.* The analyses shall be guided by whether the discussion serves to make good use of these two levels so that they could shed light on a plausible recasting of Nozick's doctrine of value as organic unity. I argue that Nozick's conception of value-as-organic-unity could be fully justified at the intuitive level, or perhaps justified in significant measure, but justified precisely and exclusively by considerations of preference satisfaction. Needless to say, this is contrary to Nozick's intentions, but it offers a potentially full-blooded presence for tracking organic unities in everyday life—both in *de re* preferences for organic unities, and also *de dicto* preferences for them, as in a school-teacher's inculcating the principle that one should pursue organic unity in one's life and creative endeavors. A detailed discussion will follow in Chapter 7, where I strive to show the extent to which value as organic unity could plausibly be incorporated into the two levels utilitarian framework.

6.1 Hare's Approach to Moral Thinking in General

To make room for some cases in which conflicts of sound prima facie principles and intuitions occur, and to ensure the possibility open for his view that "we remain free to prefer what we prefer"[86] even in a conflict-situation, R. M. Hare, in *Moral*

[86] Hare, R. M. *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method, and Point.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981. p. 225.

Thinking: Its Levels, Method and Point, formulates an account of two levels of moral thinking—the level of critical thinking and the level of intuitive thinking.

Hare draws our attention to the distinction between these two levels by pointing out that intuitions can be appealed to only at the intuitive level rather than the critical level. The function of critical thinking at the critical level, instead, is to judge whether or not the selected intuitions are admissible and to examine the extent to which such intuitions are acceptable.

He then uses two exaggerated images—"the archangel" and "the prole"—to further illustrate these two kinds of thinking. The archangel, as Hare delineates, would rely only on reason at the critical level of moral thinking to dictate a course of action rather than on any common moral intuitions and/or sound general principles. In contrast, the prole would merely use intuitive moral thinking to guide action on every occasion since the prole is totally incapable of critical thinking.

Hare asserts that people in everyday life do not always behave like each one of the extreme cases, but, without exception, all share the characteristics of one or another or both at a moment of choice. With this picture of people (or beings) in mind, questions naturally arise regarding how these two levels of moral thinking are appropriately related to each other. Hare responds to it by examining how these two levels play different roles on different occasions in moral thinking, and explicating the extent to which one's decision can be deliberately drawn and one's action can be appropriately taken in public as well as private life.

6.2 The Level of Intuitive Thinking

I am now going on to discuss the intuitive level of moral thinking. When it comes to actions, intentions, or goals that people may have to deal with in everyday life, it seems quite natural to think that people tend to make choices according to common-sense intuitions and principles.

This view, however, shows only one side of the story. The other exposes some possible situations in which irreconcilable conflicts or genuine incompatibility occurs among the set of principles or intuitions. In such infrequent situations, we must sort out the best or the most suitable ones from the pool of principles when we come to decide what we ought to do on each occasion. Undoubtedly, our decision-making at such a time cannot be given any rational or deliberate clues at the level of intuitive moral thinking since there is no way at that level to justify the acceptability of each intuition or to take any prudential consideration or to make any critical judgment.

The intuitive appeal of the notion of organic unity, for instance, exemplifies this problem in terms of conflicts of intuitions. We intuitively identify an ideal pattern of society or community as the one which is organically unified. Such an integrated pattern can be viewed as valuable because of its organic unity. This intuitive view, however, is likely to be challenged by pointing to the existence of Nazi concentration camps which apparently are highly unlikely to be considered as intrinsically valuable even though the camps are themselves highly organized unities. Subsequently, it seems that the notion of organic unity, in effect, can function to guide us in our social pursuits in certain cases and not in others.

The issue of concentration camps is severe for Nozick. He considers accepting its value yet construing it negatively (as evil, not good), but on the other hand he also considers deprecating its value because it does not score highly on the dimension of goodness.[87] What's striking, however, is that a Harean utilitarian recasting of Nozick's thinking about organic unity makes this issue dissolve. From Hare's perspective, there is only a straightforward empirical issue about whether this or that *de re* or *de dicto* organic unity tends to maximize global expected utility or not. For instance, the archangel might approve of an absolute cultural principle endorsing pursuit of organic unities, because (as a matter of empirical fact) widespread belief in that principle does not tend to foster utilitarian disasters like Hitler's concentration camps; it tends rather to send people into art museums, as a matter of fact. Or a more nuanced principle might be justified, for the same reason. The intuitive principle does not have to get things exactly right. That is the job of utilitarian calculations at the critical level.

6.3 The Level of Critical Thinking

Neither of the concerns discussed above, in Hare's opinion, raises serious problems for his account of moral thinking since the seeming problems or conflicts can be easily tackled and resolved at an alternative level, that is, the level of critical thinking. At this level, the function of critical thinking is mainly to rank, from the perspective of maximizing expected global utility, the various intuitive principles and

[87] In comparison with the former, he seems to favor the latter.

intuitions that would be the best implementation of utilitarian thinking at the intuitive level. Conflicts between principles and intuitions might be desirable from the critical point of view: The world unfolds best when people rally to opposed banners such as "Track organic unity!" and "Do whatever if it feels good!". This would be a partial vindication of Nozick's conception of organic unity. A more thoroughgoing one is not out of the question, however, in which the latter principle has little intuitive plausibility when the culture is unfolding according to archangelic designs.

Hare stresses that "what will determine our final moral judgement is our total system of preferences."[88] The preferences that Hare sketches here are not merely based upon a personal view or simply upon the only one which is preferred by one individual at a given time; rather they demand impartial attention to the preferences of all concerned. This prescriptive statement seemingly implies an "unbiased" or "impersonal" standpoint since moral judgments that one makes in terms of preferences have to take both a person's preferences and others' into consideration, equally.

When it comes to the consideration of others' preferences, one task that needs to be resolved is showing in what way impartial considerations can be coherently accommodated. Hare discusses the way in which preferred consequences can be cashed out in making final moral judgments. He points out that we typically assess our actions in terms of their outcomes and subsequently adjust our individual preferences. In the course of doing so, we place ourselves in a hypothetical situation

[88] Hare, R.M. *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method, and Point.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981. p. 225.

as if we were in the other person's position and, consequently, form the same hypothetical preferences that the person in the position actually has. The effect of this adjustment in terms of impartial preference contributes to choosing principles which impartially maximize the satisfaction of all preferences.

Such an impartial standpoint regarding weighing everyone's interests and preferences impartially is also manifestly advocated by Peter Singer. Following Hare, Singer in *Practical Ethics*[89] launches an investigation into the idea of impartiality in a brief passage in the opening chapter where he states that "I now have to take into account the interests of all those affected by my decision. This requires me to weigh up all these interests and adopt the course of action most likely to maximise the interests of those affected."[90] He goes on to discuss a number of different ways in which impartial morality may be implemented in moral thinking and formulates his principle of equal consideration of interests. The principle is characterized as follows:

> The essence of the principle of equal consideration of interests is that we give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions. This means that if only X and Y would be affected by a possible act, and if X stands to lose more than Y stands to gain, it is better not to do the act. We cannot, if we accept the principle of equal consideration of interests, say that doing the act is better, despite the facts described, because we are more concerned about Y than we are about X.[91]

This form of impartiality is "an elaboration of the familiar idea of putting oneself in the other's shoes, adjusted for beings with paws or flippers."[92] That is, instead of

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[89] Singer, Peter. *Practical Ethics*. 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
[90] Ibid. p. 13.
[91] Ibid. p. 21.
[92] Cooper, Wes. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Singer. Applied ethics. p. 3.

giving greater weight to the interests and/or preferences of any individual, this principle is committed to place great emphasis on the context in which any moral judgments are made in such a way that the interests or preferences of all those affected are taken into account.

In most cases, however, a concern that arises is that the interests and preferences are not quite fixed but are subject to change or variation in accordance with the content that they apply to. As Hare describes it, "preferences are not fixed but fluid."[93] He at this point disentangles this floating feature by using a concept of relevance in moral terms. He explains the close relationship by stating that "to treat a feature of a situation as morally relevant is to apply to that situation a moral principle which mentions the feature...It is the principles which determine what is relevant."[94] If the selected principles aim at satisfying impartial preference, then a key feature for identifying the set of "morally relevant" situations, according to Hare, has been established.

Clearly, as we have seen, the discussion of morality, for Hare (and for Singer as well), begins with preferences that need satisfying and then is guided by satisfaction of preferences as a compass. Hare's framework leaves some space for satisfaction of preference to be viewed as objectively valuable, since any preference, *pro tanto*, should be satisfied; preference-satisfaction is in this sense objectively valuable. So we are not discussing a subjectivism that deems preference-satisfaction good only from the point of view of the subject who has the preference. Discrimination

[93] Hare, R. M. *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method, and Point.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981. p. 226.
[94] Ibid. p. 63.

between this preference and that comes later, when maximization is at stake. In this context, Hare's account at least implicitly allows preference-satisfaction to be discussed in the guise of objectivity.[95] Equipped with what we have just discussed in this chapter, I will turn now to a close examination of the respects in which, if any, Nozick's account can plausibly be compatible with Hare's utilitarian strategy.

7. A Plausible Interpretation: A Utilitarian Reading to Demythify the Concept of Organic Unity

Hare's two-level theory of moral thinking has just been explicated in terms of the critical or justificatory level and the level of intuition-based decision-making. Putting aside details about Hare's view, I turn now to applying that view to Nozick's conception of value as organic unity. This utilitarian way of viewing Nozick's value theory may raise skepticism, since Nozick himself is not a proponent of utilitarianism.[96] However, those who find Nozick's conception of organic unity appealing but have reservations about his anti-utilitarian perspective will want to pay attention. Those who subscribe to preference-satisfaction utilitarianism should be especially interested.

7.1 Justifying Nozick's Standpoint at the Intuitive Level of Moral Thinking

In this section, I examine how everyday decision-making, which is tightly associated with intuitions, could establish a way in which Nozick's position can

[95] Notice that it is not to say that this objective feature, so construed, is essentially all-things-considered equal to the conception of objective value in Nozick's realizationist sense, let alone in Mackie's targeted Platonic sense.
[96] A detailed discussion will come in the section 8.2.

plausibly be advocated. To illustrate this account, I will refer to John Rawls's interpretation of the Aristotelian principle in *A Theory of Justice.* Rawls's discourse is very relevant here: His appeal to the Aristotelian principle has significant implications for validating a plea for (re)considering the conventional role of our intuitions in apprehending objects. Rawls's remarks concerning the Aristotelian principle clearly explicate a tendency—not an iron-clad necessity—in which one is intuitively in favour of objects and activities that elicit one's more complex capabilities, and in so doing create organic unity in one's life or in the artifacts of one's creation. In light of this, I will argue that Nozick's treatment of value as (degree of) organic unity has some traction at Hare's intuitive level, to the degree that the Aristotelian principle captures an important motivational truth about human beings.

Indeed, the position that I advance is that Nozick's inquiry into organic unity can be readily accepted and supported at the intuitive level, given that people's pre-reflective desires (or even their rational considerations) essentially have a tendency to favor objects which exhibit a high degree of synthesis in unity and diversity. Most of our intentional actions, which are guided by our everyday insights, are bound to such an intuitive tendency. Rawls's remarks give us a satisfactory explanation of this by making explicit that people tend to constantly surpass their present abilities largely through exercising complex skills and/or performing complex activities.

In his book *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls offers "the Aristotelian Principle."[97] As he puts it:

> other things [being] equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities) and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity [is].[98]

Rawls in this passage attempts to bring our attention to his recognition of an inclination by which people are intuitively prone to carry out activities through which their complex capacities to apprehend objects can be facilitated and developed by adopting more skillful approaches. The Aristotelian principle should be taken as a description of a motivational tendency (with a crucial "other things equal" clause). It is specifically not to be taken as a normative principle that might conflict with critical utilitarian thinking. However, such thinking might encourage an intuitive normative principle which tells people that it is good to exercise their realized complex capacities. This sort of subtlety is a basic feature of Hare's two-level view.

The range of the inclination, as Rawls sets out, could undoubtedly be widened from an individual's level to a social level, and he later explains how this might happen by saying that "activities that display intricate and subtle talents, and manifest discrimination and refinement, are valued by both the person himself and those around him."[99]

The insight behind the inclination that Rawls emphasizes actually lends itself to serve as a ground not only to set our preferences but also to direct our actions. This

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[97] Such principle, according to Rawls, is also regarded as "a principle of motivation." (Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971. p.427.)
[98] Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971. p.426.
[99] Ibid. p. 441.

grounding that Rawls establishes must be the result of the exercise of the rational faculty and ultimately lies in an assumption that there is an innate characteristic that favors the complexity involved in an inclination and that all of us possess it. To clarify this matter, Rawls gives some examples. For example, he says, "chess is a more complicated and subtle game than checkers, and algebra is more intricate than elementary arithmetic. Thus, the principle says that someone who can do both generally prefers playing chess to playing checkers, and that he would rather study algebra than arithmetic."[100]

Following up on the general assumption which applies to all individuals, Rawls goes on to expand his viewpoint by positing an interactive relationship between human activities when individuals are exercising their complex abilities and human happiness and enjoyment in achieving such complexity. On this basis, such an inclination directed by our intuitions in favor of exercising and developing our complex capacities in more skillful ways, as Rawls sketches out, turns out to significantly contribute to enhancing our quality of life in terms of happiness or enjoyment. He specifies what he means by remarking that "the intuitive idea here is that human beings take more pleasure in doing something as they become more proficient at it, and of two activities they do equally well, they prefer the one calling on a larger repertoire of more intricate and subtle discriminations."[101]

The Aristotelian principle does not require that one should have desires for complex activities *de dicto*. At the *de dicto* level one might want to do something

[100] Ibid. p.426.
[101] Ibid. p.426.

very simple: to clear one's thoughts in the manner of a Buddhist master, for example. Yet one's acquiring that mastery might call upon *de re* desires for an activity of great complexity, including development of skills in a tacit dimension that belies the original desire's *de dicto* simplicity.

An example from the art of painting on glasses may shed light on the concern in the previous paragraph. Obviously, when considering what type of design we may choose to impart to a wine glass, we intuitively tend to select some elegant designs involving complex techniques or prefer certain designs that exhibit a high degree of perfection. The process of making such desirable glasses itself, for instance, may inevitably involve the utilization of creative abilities and special skills in certain context on an individual basis. It does not necessarily follow, however, that we must develop the abilities through drawing upon our competences where special conscious reflection or certain discretion occurs regarding what type of abilities we use and in what way we may rank them. As a consequence, we may easily find that quite a number of designs are actually being considered tacitly, and their variations are far beyond any probable predictions of our consciousness.

Rawls's remarks regarding the Aristotelian principle provides us with an explanation as to why at the level of everyday thought we are intuitively willing to continuously desire (*de re*) complexity over simplicity by exercising a set of abilities specialized for apprehending complex things. Nozick's identification of organic unity as a criterion of objective value is substantially compatible with Rawls's analysis as imbedded in Hare's two-level utilitarianism, as that principle highlights

motivations that tend toward organic unities, such as a rationally unified life, artistic artifacts, high technologies, and so forth.

7.2 A Perspective on Objective Value at the Critical Level

The main task in this section is to examine Nozick's account of objective value by appeal to Hare's utilitarian considerations.[102] The point to be made is that the possibility for formulating a utilitarian reconstruction of Nozick's value theory is left open and so there is room for consequentialist moral justification to be incorporated into his account. Of primary importance to this proposed reconstruction is Nozick's illuminating discussion in *Invariances* of his genealogy of ethics where objectivity is analyzed in terms of mutual benefit.[103] In this sense, his explanation of objectivity in his genealogical project allows the proposed consequentialist reconstruction to a considerable extent. In what follows, I shall sketch out the proposal which explicates Nozick's position through the adoption of Hare's two-level approach. In considering Hare's version of preference-based utilitarianism, I will show in what sense the pursuit of objective value that Nozick maintains can plausibly be compatible with Hare's justifying position in a way that promotes utility at the critical level. To that extent, pursuing objects that exhibit organic unity can certainly be interpreted as a strategy for ordering particular preferences which subsequently leads to benefits for both the individual and all those involved.

In giving an account of how this works, I need to bring in some background

[102] Here I make no attempt to take a position on the question as to whether Nozick's viewpoint can be regarded as utilitarian or not, as it is largely a matter of terminology.
[103] Nozick at this point admits that not all mutual benefit possesses ethical characteristic.

considerations here, discussing what precisely draws the divide between consequentialism and non-consequentialism. The line is drawn by referring to how much weight is put on the consequences of moral behaviors. Positions differ in terms of how the two camps view the overall outcomes of moral acts. The consequentialist, speaking normatively, insists that individual choices involving actions are simply made as guidelines for the sake of their consequences or for the evaluation of moral acts. In this sense, maximizing the sum of good consequences and/or minimizing the total number of bad ones turns out to be the best fit because doing so is an end or a goal that the impact of guided actions is supposed to achieve. This position is typically regarded as a goal-directed one with a presumption that "a moral concern can function only as a moral *goal*, as an end state for some activities to achieve as their result."[104] On the contrary, for the non-consequentialist, such decisions or evaluations can never be reached solely through the sum of the consequences of choices. Factors other than consequences such as rights are taken into account.

In *Anarchy, State, and Utopia,* Nozick stresses the contrast between goal-directed consequentialism and rule-directed non-consequentialism by demonstrating that the former treats any selected principles as goals to guide our actions, whereas, the latter treats the principles as constraints to limit the range of our actions. The line that Nozick takes is seemingly in favor of the latter, yet he does not deny the possibility of the former. This possibility is suggested in *The Nature of Rationality*, where Nozick

[104] Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974. p. 28.

points out that "it is natural to think of rationality as a goal-directed process."[105] More significantly, in Chapter 3 of *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Nozick explicitly acknowledges a role that goal-directedness plays in his genealogy. This is made clear when he admits that specific decisions to violate rights might have to be executed "in order to avoid catastrophic moral horror."[106] The violation of rights in such cases is consequentially justified. To that extent, Nozick indeed does not exclude the possibility that we can have reasons to perform goal-directed actions in the pursuit of goals. Nor does he exclude the possibility of reconstructing his theory of value by appeal to utilitarian considerations.

This thesis in effect reminds him and the reader of this possibility. More broadly, Nozick's distinction between the genealogy of morals and foundational individual rights is replaced by critical utilitarian thinking, on the one hand, and an intuitive principle of respecting individual rights, on the other hand. Nozick's "rights as side constraints" may be justified at the intuitive level, or justified to a degree, but they have no foundational weight, which is reserved exclusively for utilitarian considerations at the critical level, about "how the interests of all parties affected by the act, including the agent, enter into the generation of the universal reasons implied by a moral judgment"[107] and "how the conflicting interests of different individuals should be combined to reach moral conclusions."[108]

In sum, Hare would respond to the concerns of non-consequentialist by reference

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[105] Nozick, Robert. *The Nature of Rationality*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993. p.64.
[106] Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974. p. 30 (footnote).
[107] Nagel, Thomas. *Other Minds: Critical Essays 1969-1994*. Oxford University Press, 1995. p. 161.
[108] Ibid. p. 159.

to a systematic account at the critical level, in terms of maximizing the satisfaction of considered preferences, that vindicates their concerns with prima facie principles at the intuitive level. What he must insist upon, however, is that fundamental moral illumination comes through universalizability in treating like cases alike, in a manner that can survive putting oneself in another's position. In doing so, Hare aims at promoting the satisfaction of preferences with reference to universalizability which overrides any other principles or intuitions, notably those that may obtain at the intuitive level of common-sense.

The concerns that have been discussed so far in the preceding paragraphs will not be pursued any further here, because there is no commitment to develop a full-blown rebuttal defending the maximizing satisfaction function of Hare's preference-based utilitarian position in this thesis. Instead, I argue in this section that the pursuit of value-as-organic-unity is a possible upshot of a Harean utilitarian framework, depending crucially on empirical questions that are at best partially resolved by the foregoing discussion of the Aristotelian principle.

Additionally, Nozick's account does acknowledge that there may be objective values which are not characterized by organic unity. This acknowledgement goes some way toward reconciling value-as-organic-unity with the Harean utilitarian's empirical approach toward what is valuable.

8. Nozick's Experience Machine Thought-Experiment: A Challenge

In *Philosophical Explanations*, there are crucial arguments against the idea that

only affective states matter. These arguments are raised by Nozick's well-known Experience Machine thought-experiment. In his thought experiment, Nozick guides us to imagine an experience machine which gives us any experience we may desire to have and also makes us feel as though all that we desire is being satisfied. He writes:

> Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life experiences? ... Of course, while in the tank you won't know that you're there; you'll think that it's all actually happening.... Would you plug in?[109]

In this respect, a hedonist, for instance, might state that the question which Nozick raises should be answered affirmatively, since felt experience, such as happiness or pleasure that people may obtain in the desired state of affairs described above can certainly be maximized through the machine. It is the pursuit of the maximal amount of pleasure, according to hedonism or hedonic utilitarianism, that directs our decisions as to what conduct is most desirable for maintaining a good and valuable life. Pleasure is regarded as the only intrinsic good, as well as the only important thing in life. As Bentham puts it in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, "[nature] has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain, and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as

[109] Nozick, Robert. "The Experience Machine," *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974. pp. 42-3.

well as to determine what we shall do."[110] In sum, for the hedonist, nothing ultimately matters but felt experience.

Nozick, however, avoids the hedonic utilitarian position in his reply to the question, holding that people should not plug into the machine that the scenario he describes. He casts doubt on the utilitarian view with respect to the crucial role of felt experience, and excludes the possibility of situations where our lives would turn out to be more valuable than our present ones in the "real" world after plugging in the machine, because, in Nozick's view, what we essentially want in life is not just a sum of pleasures. Spending our lives in the postulated virtual reality could achieve nothing but such kind of illusory felt experience. At this point he contends that there must be something that can matter to us, independently of how our experiences feel "from the inside."[111] These certain things, he asserts, mark a sharp difference in moral status; that is, they affect our actions without heavily relying upon our feelings.

To defend his position, Nozick provides reasons as to why people would not hook themselves up to the experience machine. He articulates three reasons not to plug in. Nozick observes that people are intuitively inclined to "*do* certain things, and not just have the experience of doing them."[112] Accordingly, he points out that the first reason is that people actually value doing certain activities in the real world rather than merely passively receiving experiences of an artificial world. It is this intuition which guides people not to plug into the machine.

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[110] Bentham, Jeremy. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1879.
[111] Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974. p. 42.
[112] Ibid. p. 43.

The second reason for not plugging in, from Nozick's perspective, is that people generally "want to *be* a certain way"[113] and value being certain kinds of persons. Plugging into the machine, in Nozick's view, is equivalent to "a kind of suicide"[114] in the sense that the person who plugs in to the machine completely relinquishes the real world in favour of an artifice. This leads us to a situation in which "nothing about what we are like can matter except as it gets reflected in our experiences."[115]

The third reason that Nozick appeals to aims to show that contacting with reality plays an essential role in our lives in the sense that our interactions with the real world are valuable in themselves. Plugging into the experience machine, however, "limits us to a man-made reality, to a world no deeper or more important than that which people can construct. There is no *actual* contact with any deeper reality, though the experience of it can be simulated."[116]

These three reasons, taken together, are closely related to Nozick's views about free will. Nozick's primary concern in discussing free will is to try to "formulate a view of how we (sometimes) act so that if we act that way our value is not threatened, our stature is not diminished."[117] The absence of free will, for Nozick, would certainly "undercut human dignity."[118] Recalling the three reasons that Nozick gives, it seems that to a large extent these reasons are jointly supported by Nozick's discussion of free will in the sense that a desire for free will grounds each of the reasons. It grounds them insofar as these three reasons are appealing only if people

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[113] Ibid. p. 43.
[114] Ibid. p. 43.
[115] Ibid. p. 43.
[116] Ibid. p. 43.
[117] Nozick, Robert. *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981. p. 291.
[118] Ibid. p. 291.

can exercise free will. In what follows, it might be helpful to move to a discussion of Nozick's treatment of free will.

Nozick starts his treatment of free will by distinguishing deterministic views (whereby the occurrence of every choice, decision, and action is causally determined by prior conditions or occurrences) and indeterministic ones (whereby events, decisions, or actions are mere random happenings as a matter of chance, and therefore have no cause). In an effort to "formulate a conception of human action that leaves agents valuable," [119] Nozick presents his contra-deterministic account which approaches the issue of free will in a way that "defang[s] determinism without denying it."[120] In his opinion, our choices, decisions, or actions are caused by our reasons, but they are not causally determined by the reasons because Nozick emphasizes that it is "up to us" to give weight to the reasons.

To ground the value of our actions, to maintain our value, and to act with dignity are the sorts of things that we really want to achieve through a process of choice chosen by us, Nozick continues. He explicitly points this out by saying that "[w]hat we want to be able to do is to choose radically new goals"; "to choose [by] ourselves, all the way up to our highest (order) flow diagram"; and "not be tied to modifications of the goals built into us."[121]

The decision to plug into the machine, however, thwarts our ability to pursue those goals which rely for their very existence on our status as freely acting agents.[122]

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[119] Ibid. p. 291.
[120] Ibid. p. 292.
[121] Ibid. p. 353.
[122] Such goals importantly embody the three reasons Nozick provides for not plugging into the experience machine.

As such, people who are in the experience machine are never fully able to capture what they want when they want to act freely. Once plugged in, no weight is given to the value of the occurrence of any choice and decision, let alone the free agency which grounds action and human dignity. Therefore, plugging into the experience machine would subvert the occurrence of one's actual decision and to that extent undermine the value of exercising free will.

The argument here is not that free will advocates can and determinists cannot provide reasons to dissuade us from plugging into the experience machine. Whether we adopt a deterministic picture of the world or a picture which makes room for free will, actions can be valued for the difference they make in the world. This kind of value is known as "contributory value." Plugging into the experience machine thwarts the contributory value of both predetermined and freely chosen actions, since what goes on inside the experience machine makes no difference to the world outside. The point I am making here, rather, concerns "originative value" or the value that comes from the agent's free choice being the result of how that agent weighs her reasons for action. The experience machine precludes not only the contributory value of actions but also the originative value of choice by rendering free choice impossible. Plugging in to the machine amounts to relinquishing all the dignity that comes with being an agent.

In order to grasp precisely Nozick's appeals in light of his concern of free agency, it might be helpful to use an example for the further discussion. Consider now a scenario where people's lives are at the terminal stage. The case of Sue Rodriguez in

1993[123], for example, illustrates well such a situation. Sue was terminally ill and was experiencing dwindling pleasures. The quality of her life had been deeply affected by the burden of her illness and her total dependence upon others. Instead of wrestling with intolerable physical pain and mental distress, Sue wished to be offered the opportunity to be released from her suffering through a "good" death[124] or a dignified death.[125]

For many people whose lives are good, there might be no reason to enter the machine, since it would be better to live real lives rather than to seem to live them. For others like Sue, whose lives are miserable and will continue to be bitter, however, it might not turn out to be a rational choice to stay out the machine, since the machine can provide much more comfortable experiences even though they are illusory. The rejection of the experience machine, in such circumstance, would seemingly be an intelligibly rational but pragmatically irrational choice. Intuitively, one might then ask, if the concern is for making contact with actual reality and the value of exercising free agency as Nozick stated before, whether there is an exception at least for life-threatening circumstances like that of Sue Rodriguez. Terminally ill individuals in such situations no longer possess the capacity either to do things or to maintain a personal touch. In Sue's case, for example, in light of the fact that further medical

[123] The case of Sue Rodriguez is a classic Canadian legal case. In 1993, the Supreme Court upheld a decision in prohibiting physician-assisted death. Sue Rodriguez was a 42-year-old terminally ill woman with a severe swallow or breathing problem who was completely dependent on others. When her life became intolerable and no longer livable, she asked a physician to help end her life for her, since she could not commit suicide on her own. Her wish conflicted with the Criminal Code in Canada, specifically, infringing section 241(b) where one cannot aid anyone to commit suicide. The controversial question posed in this case was whether the prohibition on physician-assisted suicide violated Sue Rodriguez's constitutional rights. I will neither touch on nor expand on the controversial issue here. Instead, my intent is just to cite the background of the case as an example of the scenario described above.

[124] Dialysis, Cohen L. "Discontinuation: a 'good' death?" *Archives of Internal Medicine*. 1995. 155: 42-7.

[125] Brennan, T. A. "Ethics Committees and Decisions to Limit Care: The experience at the Massachusetts General Hospital." *JAMA*. 1988. 260(6): 803-7.

treatment or the continuation of life support can no longer benefit her, the action of plugging into the machine, intuitively, might seem to be in Sue's best interest on all counts in the sense that it could alleviate suffering, maintain positive emotional reactions, and avoid circumstances in which human dignity at the end stage of life was degraded.

A hedonist who believes that pleasure is ultimately all that matters would welcome the above concern as long as the activity of doing so increases the amount of pleasure. The experience machine does so to increase pleasure, since once connected to the machine, it would make us believe we are living a life where whatever pleasurable experiences we might wish to have could be satisfied. In this case, when it comes to clarifying the extent to which our feelings matter to us, Nozick turns to the notion of happiness in his book *The Examined Life* in an effort to diminish (and even to eliminate) the possibility that the value of our lives is importantly dependent upon our psychological states alone.

In contrast to the hedonistic concern, the classical utilitarian justifies actions only insofar as they produce the greatest amount of happiness or pleasure which leads to promoting the best overall results for the greatest number of people. As such, classical utilitarians would find the plugging-in action morally justifiable just in case it maximizes the total utility or happiness of the individuals in the community. In order to secure the total happiness, classical utilitarianism requires that every individual in the community should enter into the machine so that the sum of total utility can reach its maximum.

From a more sophisticated utilitarian point of view, such as Hare's, the justification for plugging in would not be as straightforward as the one that the classical utilitarian provides, even for Sue's case as described above. Recalling his two-level strategy, Hare, intuitively, might endorse Sue plugging in due to the disaster circumstance that happened. He might even go further to sanction universal plugging in if the world were indeed catastrophic and the experience machine technology allowed such an extension for universal plugging-in. From a critical perspective, Hare would of course claim that the decision on the plugging in issue depends on the distribution of preferences among the members of the community involved. Intuitively, people would prefer to live and interact in the real world, and so the decision for universal plugging in must be motivated by circumstances which are so grave that these intuitive preferences of the individuals could not be justified. The experience machine hence precludes the possibility for these preferences to be satisfied, only leaving room for the satisfaction of preferences having to do with felt experiences. The action of universal plugging in can only be justified if it is the one which is most satisfactory, given the preferences of all involved.[126]

Nozick may well accept this sophisticated utilitarian response, yet he would not accept a classical utilitarian justification. The classical utilitarian insight, on Nozick's view, cannot work as it stands, since it misses out some crucial features which are significant in the pursuit of a valuable life. As briefly discussed at the

[126] As previously mentioned in the discussion of Hare's account, these are not personal preferences, but rather impartial ones, in the sense that they are arrived at through equal consideration of individuals' preferences. In cases where conflict among individuals' preferences arises, the impartial preferences overrule the individual's preferences.

beginning of this section, this is the line that Nozick actually takes when he addresses the weighty reasons as to why people should not enter the machine. To further illustrate his account, I move the focus now to Nozick's *The Examined Life*, since his meditations in *The Examined Life* exposit, highlight, and elaborate the primary points which he wants to articulate in his thought experiment.

Relevant to the previous discussion, Nozick starts off his first meditation in *The Examined Life* by touching on the theme of death. In this meditation on dying, his investigation of "what the important things are—not in preparation for dying but to advance living"[127] is launched. He concludes that both possessing certain capacities to do things and connecting with others and reality are essential for us in order to maintain a valuable life. Nozick insists near the close of this meditation that one who has had an ample life and possesses the capacity to do things should "risk his life or lay it down for another person or for some noble and decent cause."[128]

To unfold this reflection, Nozick reaffirms his contra-deterministic account of free will and indicates that "utilizing the freedom of action that is gained by the willingness to run serious risks, people's ingenuity will devise new modes and patterns of effective action which others can emulate, individually or jointly."[129] To make the point clear, he goes further to reexamine his machine example. According to Nozick, the designed experience machine would be deterministic in the sense that it deprives us of the possibility to exercise our free agency, even if the machine would have a randomizing device which provides uncertainty. It is in this sense that no

[127] Nozick, Robert. *The Examined Life: philosophical meditations*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989. p. 22.
[128] Ibid. p. 27.
[129] Ibid. p. 27.

opportunity or possibility would turn out to be available for us to have any impact or effect towards the actual world. As Nozick at this point succinctly puts it, "once on the machine a person would not make any choices, and certainly would not choose anything *freely*. One portion of what we want to be actual is our actually (and freely) choosing, not merely the appearance of that."[130]

Accordingly, the underlying point is to show that it is valuable to act in a way that links with actuality, a way that influences our lives authentically. He explicitly articulates that the actual connection with reality is much more valuable to us than the inner feeling of happiness provided by the machine. In a passage that occurs near the very end of all his meditations in *The Examined Life*, Nozick reemphasizes that

> We want nothing other than to live in a spiral of activities and enhance others' doing so, deepening our own reality as we come into contact and relation with the rest, exploring the dimensions of reality, embodying them in ourselves, creating, responding to the full range of the reality we can discern with the fullest reality we possess, becoming a vehicle for truth, beauty, goodness, and holiness, adding our own characteristic bit to reality's eternal processes.[131]

In sum, the point of Nozick's machine example is to declare that reality matters. Plugging in, Nozick insists, would undermine our dignity in the specific sense that the pursuits in terms of making direct connection with reality, exercising one's free agency, and performing responsive actions to others, in Nozick's view, cannot be achieved once in the machine.

Claims made in the discussion of this thought experiment bring out some destructive effect at least to versions of utilitarianism that tend to maximize the

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[130] Ibid. p. 108.
[131] Ibid. p. 302.

amount of sensory experiences. However, these claims are not strong enough to justify an objective account or to systematically undercut all utilitarian theories of value in general. As we have seen, Nozick has done nothing intentionally to rule out the plausibility of others forms of utilitarianism. R. M. Hare's version of utilitarianism, which is concerned with maximizing considered preferences rather than some unit of felt experiences, is neatly compatible with Nozick's points. Most people who put much weight on the connection with the real world, the relations with others, and the exercise of certain capacities over the pursuit of simple pleasures would choose to avoid the experience machine, since their considered preferences with external objects cannot be satisfied once in the machine. In such cases, there would be no reason for not adopting the same solution as Nozick does in his machine example. Hare would justify the rejection of the machine only to the extent that it could promote the maximal satisfaction of considered preferences. Nozick's thought experiment does not rule out this way of justification and leaves it open for Nozick's theory to be incorporated in the teleological structure.

9. An Adjustment

In what follows, I will offer some insights derived from David O. Brink's objective utilitarianism where he provides some helpful clarifications as to the question of how to incorporate the ideals of passionate concern to Nozick—those that he expresses in the Matrix of Reality in *The Examined Life*—into a teleological moral structure that can be understood as standing half-way between Nozick's

anti-utilitarian realizationism, on the one hand, and a preference-satisfying utilitarianism on the other hand. In the spirit of Nozick's concern with ideals that cannot be reduced to preference satisfaction, Brink shows how utilitarianism in the spirit of Mill's "higher pleasures" could incorporate Nozick's ideals (without succumbing to problems peculiar to Mill's version of utilitarianism).

Unlike Hare's version of utilitarianism which construes utility as preference satisfaction, David Brink in Chapter 8 of *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* incorporates an objective construal of value into a teleological moral structure in an attempt to formulate an objective version of utilitarianism which construes objective welfare as what is of value. To avoid a possible misunderstanding, objectivity as objective welfare is distinct from objectivity as moral realism. Brink's objective utilitarianism is a normative view that recommends maximizing objective welfare. His moral realism is a metaethical view, which will not be discussed here, that identifies moral facts with physical microstructure. It is Brink's normative theory, his objective utilitarianism, into which I now show that Nozick's conception of value-as-organic-unity could be imbedded.

Here is the position that Brink delineates with regards to the objective conception of welfare:

> [A] valuable life consists in the possession of certain character traits, the development and exercise of certain capacities, and the possession of certain relationships to others and the world, and that the value of these things is independent of the pleasure they produce or of their being the object of desire.[132]

[132] Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989. p. 10.

In his defense of moral objectivity, Brink explicitly affirms that there is a set of character traits, activities, and relationships that are valuable in themselves and whose value is independent of any psychological states. As such, he construes welfare in a way which favors an ideal-regarding conception of utility and contends that this utility is different from preference-satisfaction or felt experiences like pleasure.

To put the point more succinctly, Brink develops his account with regards to the objective conception of welfare by tackling the question of what the constituents of a valuable life are. On his account, Brink uncovers three components as the primary ones for his construal of human welfare, including reflective pursuit of appropriate personal projects, realization of such projects, and certain personal and social interactions. Each of these, according to Brink, corresponds to something that exists in our rational and social human natures and reflects the objective nature of welfare. Brink remarks:

> As components of human welfare, pursuit and realization of admissible projects and personal and social relationships exhibiting respect for persons are intrinsically valuable. Actions, motives, and other things that express these values are themselves intrinsically valuable, while actions, motives, and other things that causally contribute to the realization of these values are extrinsically valuable.[133]

As we can see from this quote, Brink distinguishes between components of human welfare which are intrinsically valuable and components which are extrinsically valuable. These latter components involve freedom, education, and the conditions of basic well-being.

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[133] Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989. p. 234.

In order to fully appreciate the significance of the objectivity that Brink incorporates into the conception of welfare, it will be helpful to examine the way in which these necessary conditions function as valid grounds for the primary components to be properly implemented. Instead of discussing all of the necessary conditions that Brink brings out, I now enumerate only the most important for the purpose of this section. The first necessary condition is:

> In order to pursue personal projects and pursue appropriate kinds of personal and social relationships, agents must be capable of exercising certain kinds of personal and civic freedom and opportunities.[134]

Brink stresses that freedom is one of the crucial necessary conditions for the realization of any intrinsic value and must deserve prior attention. The priority that Brink bestows on free will exhibits a neat resonance with the account of Nozick's. According to Nozick, choices that are made freely play an essential constitutive role in making us who we are. It is this that determines the weight of various considerations when a choice between mutually exclusive options has to be made. As we have seen, Nozick's experience machine thought-experiment, for instance, exemplifies the extent to which he articulates the intrinsic value of exercising free agency. The fact that most people would not go into such an experience machine, for Nozick, demonstrates that the ability to freely make decisions and the capacity to interact with reality matters.

The second condition with which Brink is concerned is that

In order to pursue admissible projects, it is required that agents possess certain

[134] Ibid. p. 234.

> abilities so that they are able to compare actual projects with alternative ones, to assess the relative importance of actual projects, and to facilitate the realization of larger projects. These abilities can be greatly enhanced by education.[135]

Nozick would endorse this condition by referring to his matrix of reality where various evaluative dimensions he sketches are highly unified in an interrelated network. The various projects that people in a society engage with correspond to the different evaluative dimensions of reality, and the value of the individual projects derives from their playing an integral part in a system which exemplifies the matrix of reality. Since the matrix of reality is an organically united whole, and has value insofar as it is so united, its embodiment in social systems imbues those systems with value likewise.[136]

Brink's final condition is formulated:

> In order for realization of any one of these three primary components, a possession of the goods of basic well-being (basic goods) is required.[137]

Brink specifies basic goods as those which are required "to satisfy at least minimal nutritional, medical, and psychological needs."[138] He then notes that the condition of basic well-being must have priority among various other goods, since it is as essential as the condition of freedom which is necessary for the realization of any intrinsic value. Nozick would endorse this condition as driven by his concern for human dignity, especially when its fulfillment enables everyone to retain free will and

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[135] Ibid. p. 234.
[136] Indeed Nozick praises democracy in *The Examined Life* ("The Zigzag of Politics") because it enables a zigzag course among the values worth collectively pursuing, as one political party's agenda is replaced by the next's. One might add to Brink's remark that such zigzag is greatly enhanced by an educated citizenry.
[137] Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989. p. 234.
[138] Ibid. p. 234.

the capacity for decision making.[139]

Such formulations of the conditions, as Brink notes, are neither exclusive nor conclusive. He leaves the field widely open for further conditions. As he puts it, "this conception [of welfare], no doubt, needs to be articulated more fully, and this articulation might reveal further components of human well-being and more specific or additional relations of priority among its components."[140] The way is open, specifically, to introduce organic unity to his list of intrinsic goods. This would effect integration with Nozick's concern about intrinsic value, especially value as organic unity and the exfoliation of value in his matrix of reality.

As such, what makes the pursuit of rational prudence valuable, for Brink, is not that it bears an appropriate relation to promoting the satisfaction of preference. Instead, his objective utilitarianism is oriented, like Nozick's, toward goods that are valuable in themselves, apart from mere preference. In any event, it is almost certain that it is this kind of objective construal that makes the proposed interpretation closer to the ideal-tracking orientation of Nozick's theory of value. On the other hand, skeptics about desire-independent intrinsic value, especially those who are sympathetic toward utilitarianism, have reason to consider Hare's two-level theory in order to capture any intuitions they may have about value-as-organic-unity. In the spirit of Nozick's non-coercive conception of philosophy, this thesis leaves such choices to the reader.

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[139] Nozick's libertarianism makes his commitment to addressing such needs somewhat problematic—he said different things at different times—but it would seem that an objective utilitarianism like Brink's would give Nozick much that he wanted to get from value as organic unity. This kind of issues as to how Nozick's libertarianism is to be reconciled with his concern that basic needs be met is beyond the scope of this project.

[140] Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989. p. 236.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined Nozick's objective value theory and argued that it can overcome the objection that it is intractable or mythical. I have done so by presenting a plausible interpretation which incorporates Nozick's theory of value as organic unity in a utilitarian framework. The arguments have shown the extent to which Nozick's value theory can accommodate such a proposed utilitarian reading.

Put more specifically, I have discussed Hare's two-level utilitarian ethical framework. I have argued that the conception of value-as-organic-unity, at the intuitive level, can be implemented to offer a tractable means of organizing our various capacities. Rawls's remarks on the Aristotelian principle at this point have provided sufficient support to explain our intuitive tendency, in which we pursue objects that display a high degree of synthesis in unity and diversity by constantly performing complex activities or skills. At the critical level, such pursuit, as I have pointed out, can be justified insofar as it allows not only the individual but also all those involved to lead better lives, even though at this level, it is valuable merely instrumentally. Brink's attempt in his construal of objective welfare in general and his list of intrinsic goods in particular has presented itself as an insightful example of how to incorporate objectivity into a teleological moral structure. The appreciation of Brink's contributions has shown its benefit to the proposed interpretation by making the proposed utilitarian reading more plausible.

It is important to repeat that I am not implying either that Nozick's value theory requires a utilitarian theory, or that utilitarianism itself demands an objective notion of value a la Nozick's organic unity. The point rather is that the organic unity account

is consistent with the utilitarian framework and that the implementation has mutual benefits for both of the accounts.

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