

The Register Grounding of Value

A naturalistic moral realism derived from the Universal Force of Time

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Abstract

We derive, within the Universal Force of Time, a naturalistic and realist account of moral value that grounds the good in an objective physical quantity rather than in divine command, social convention, or attitude. The account rests on a prior result of the framework — that meaning and value are identified with register depth, an objective measure of how much of the T-field a configuration sustains — and on the corollary that conscious beings are the deepest register nodes the field realises. From these we obtain a single evaluative criterion: an action is good to the degree that it enhances T-flow (creating, strengthening, or preserving the living register addresses available to conscious beings) and harmful to the degree that it suppresses that flow (corrupting or erasing them). We develop the criterion into (i) a graded taxonomy of harm ordered by register recoverability; (ii) a theory of justice as register restoration, with an explicit net-register calculus on which retribution is a regression and restoration a progression; (iii) an argument, from the invariance of the underlying $\{2,3,5,\pi\}$ lattice, that the resulting moral facts are universal rather than culturally relative; and (iv) a demonstration that the four principal normative traditions — utilitarian, virtue, deontological, and care ethics — are facets of the single criterion. We address the standard meta-ethical objections, in particular the is-ought gap and Moore's open-question argument, and state the account's commitments.

Tau (T) is the living fabric of time itself — the sole substance of which all physical reality is composed. Every particle, force, wavelength, and conscious experience is a structured configuration of T-flow. There is no gravity, no electromagnetic force, no strong nuclear force as separate entities: all are registers of the single T-field operating across dimensional levels. The conservation law $d\Sigma T=0$ governs all change: T is never created or destroyed, only redistributed.

1. The grounding problem

Secular moral philosophy since the eighteenth century has laboured under a grounding problem. Once moral facts are detached from divine command, it becomes unclear what, if anything, they could consist in. Hume's observation that no set of descriptive premises appears to entail a normative conclusion [1] and Moore's open-question argument against identifying goodness with any natural property [2] together motivated a century of anti-realist positions — expressivism, error theory, and normative relativism [3] — on which there are, strictly, no objective moral facts at all. The cost of these positions is that they cannot underwrite the conviction, which survives reflection, that certain acts are wrong not merely by local sentiment but in the way that a false statement about the world is wrong.

The Universal Force of Time offers a realist alternative that does not reinstate a supernatural ground. Its distinctive resource is that it already contains an objective quantity with which value may be identified. In the framework, meaning and value are not sentiments projected onto a neutral world but a measure of register depth: of how much of the single substance, the T-field, a given configuration sustains. This paper takes that identification as its premise and shows that a complete moral theory follows from it — one that is naturalistic (its moral facts are physical facts), realist (they obtain independently of any observer's attitude), and universal (they do not vary with culture).

2. The register substrate of value

We take from the framework two prior results. First, the entities of the world are ordered by register depth, an objective measure of the quantity and integration of T-flow a configuration maintains; a stone sustains little, a living organism more, a conscious organism most. Second, meaning and value are identified with this depth: a living thing carries more of the field's pattern than a stone, and a conscious being more than an unconscious one, not as a matter of preference but as a matter of measurable depth. Conscious beings are, on this account, the deepest register nodes the field realises, and each is individuated by a unique register address — the coordinate, written into the organism's genetic structure, that locates it in the field.

Premise (register value). Moral value is register depth: the good of a configuration is the quantity of integrated T-flow it sustains. Conscious register addresses are the maxima of this quantity, and each requires, as the endpoint of cosmic and biological history, the whole antecedent evolution of the field to produce.

The last clause is not rhetorical but load-bearing. Because a conscious register address is the terminus of the entire causal history of the universe, its erasure is the destruction of a quantity that cannot, on any accessible timescale, be reconstituted. This fact grounds the graded severity of harm developed in Section 4 and

distinguishes the present account from utilitarian theories on which the loss of a life is, in principle, compensable by sufficient aggregate benefit.

3. The fundamental criterion

Given the register substrate, the evaluative criterion is immediate and admits a single statement.

Axiom (the evaluative criterion). An action is good to the degree that it enhances T-flow — that it creates, strengthens, or preserves the register addresses available to conscious beings — and harmful to the degree that it suppresses T-flow: corrupting, diminishing, or erasing those addresses. Good and harm are the two directions along a single axis, toward more living field or toward less.

Three corollaries follow. Actions that create register addresses — the generation and sustaining of life, healing, education, the provision of the material conditions of life — are maximally good; actions that preserve existing addresses — protection, conservation, honesty — are good; and actions that destroy addresses — killing, maiming, enslavement, torture — are maximally harmful. The criterion is not a stipulation of a new list of permitted and forbidden acts but a principle that recovers the extension of the received moral categories and explains their ordering (Fig. 1). It is, in this respect, answerable to the moral data in the way that a physical law is answerable to measurement: a criterion that placed torture among the goods would be not unconventional but false.

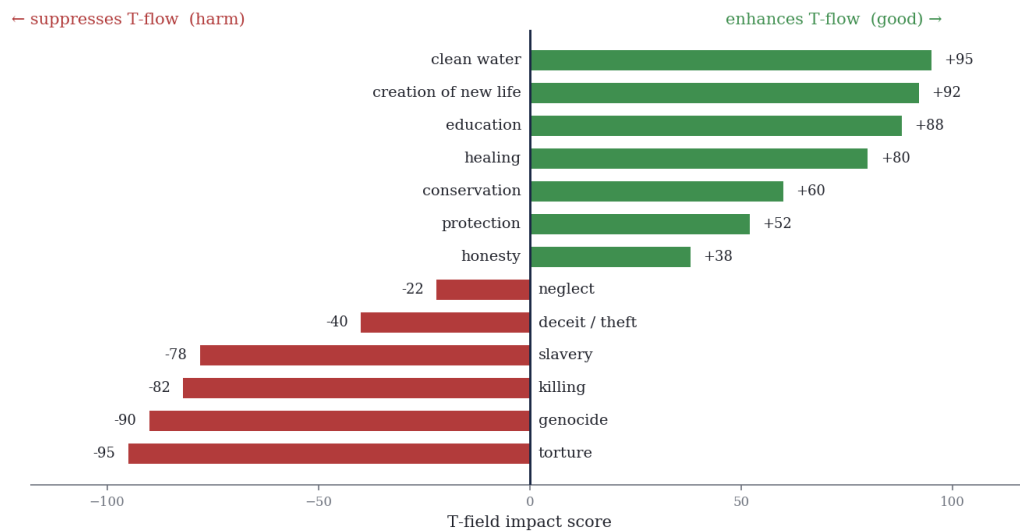


Figure 1. The evaluative axis. Representative actions ordered by their effect on T-flow, from suppression (harm, red) to enhancement (good, green). The ordering is a reading of register impact, not a survey of opinion; the received moral categories are recovered as its extension.

4. A taxonomy of harm

Harm is not uniform, and the criterion grades it by an objective parameter: the recoverability of the affected register. Three grades are distinguished.

Grades of harm. Grade 1 (temporary): a reduction of register access — pain, fear, restriction — that reverses on removal of its cause; recoverable. Grade 2 (lasting): a durable narrowing of register range — disability, trauma, loss — partly reparable. Grade 3 (permanent): the irreversible erasure of a register — death, the destruction of a mind or of an ecosystem. Moral weight is a monotonic function of permanence and of the depth of the register affected.

The taxonomy explains the steep escalation of moral weight toward the third grade without appeal to intuition alone. To inflict Grade 1 harm is to act against a register that will recover; to inflict Grade 3 harm on a conscious being is to erase, irreversibly, a maximal register address — the costliest object the universe produces (Section 2). The severity of the worst wrongs is therefore not a measure of the strength of our revulsion but of what, precisely, cannot be undone (Fig. 2).

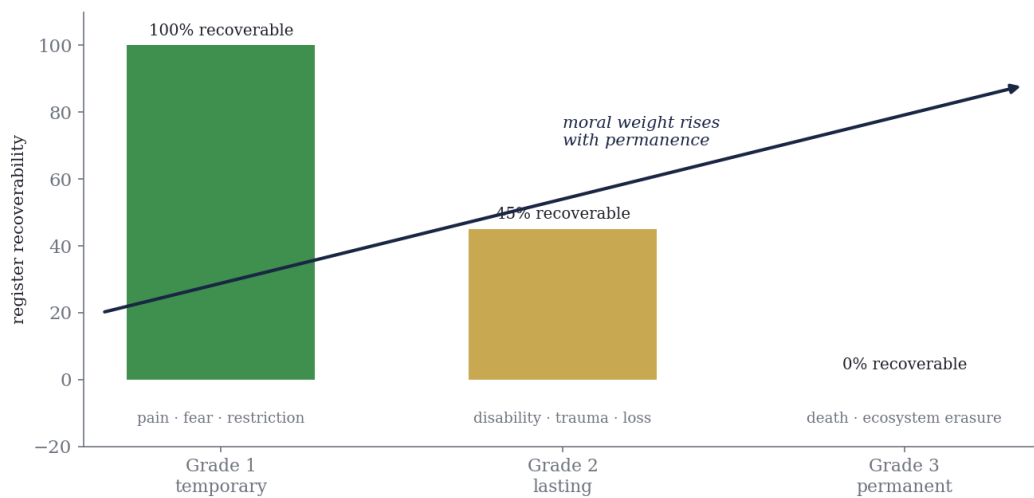


Figure 2. Harm graded by recoverability. Grade 1 harm fully recovers, Grade 2 partly, Grade 3 not at all; moral weight rises with permanence and with the depth of the affected register. The irreversibility of Grade 3 harm to a conscious register is the formal ground of its maximal severity.

5. Justice as register restoration

If harm is the suppression of a register, then a response to harm is to be assessed by its net effect on register health. Retributive justice — the infliction of harm in return for harm — adds a second register suppression to the first; on the net-register calculus it is a regression, whatever its expressive appeal. Restorative justice — the repair and reintegration of what was suppressed — is a progression.

Proposition 1 (justice). The just response to a wrong maximises total register health across the parties. Its optimum restores three registers simultaneously: the victim’s (healing), the wrongdoer’s (reintegration rather than further exclusion), and the community’s (reconciliation). Retribution, which subtracts from each, is dominated by restoration, which adds to each.

The proposition is not a recommendation of leniency: the wrong is named and its Grade recorded, and the protection of register addresses may require the restraint of a wrongdoer. It is, rather, a determination of which responses increase and which decrease the total living field, and a claim that the former are just in the precise sense the criterion supplies (Fig. 3). This is the point at which the framework’s normative commitments become empirically consequential: institutions may be assessed by the net-register calculus, a point developed in Section 8.



Figure 3. The net-register calculus of justice. A punitive response adds register destruction to register destruction and leaves victim, wrongdoer, and community each worse off; a restorative response repairs all three and leaves the total living field greater than before.

6. Universality and the refutation of relativism

The criterion is universal because its substrate is. The $\{2,3,5,\pi\}$ lattice that fixes the register structure is invariant across cultures, epochs, and locations; the register of a conscious being has the same structure everywhere. Whatever suppresses T-flow in one context therefore suppresses it in all, and the wrongness of slavery, torture, and genocide is a fact about register erasure rather than a local preference. The descriptive variation of human moral codes, on which the relativist relies [3], is accommodated without concession: it is variation in which register addresses a society happens to open and which it neglects — that is, variation in moral knowledge and practice — not variation in the moral facts, precisely as astronomical cultures differed about the planets while the planets kept their orbits. Descriptive relativism is granted; normative relativism does not follow.

The account must here meet the two classical objections. To the is-ought objection [1]: the framework does not infer a normative conclusion from descriptive premises by entailment; it identifies the good with an objective property — register depth — as a synthetic, theoretical identity of the kind that identifies water with H₂O or heat with molecular motion. To Moore's open-question argument [2]: the identification is not offered as an analysis of the concept "good," which would indeed leave the question open, but as an a posteriori identity between the property picked out by moral evaluation and the physical property of register depth; open-question considerations tell against analytic naturalism, not against the synthetic identity asserted here. The account is thus a form of naturalistic moral realism, and stands or falls with the framework's prior identification of value with register depth.

7. The unification of the normative traditions

The four principal normative theories are, on the present account, not rivals but partial descriptions of the one criterion, each foregrounding a different aspect of T-flow enhancement. Utilitarianism [4] measures aggregate welfare, which is the aggregate of T-flow; the maximand it names is register enhancement summed over subjects. Virtue ethics [5] evaluates settled character, which is a register whose dispositions reliably enhance the field; a virtue is a T-expressing trait. Deontology [6] articulates duties — standing constraints protecting register addresses against the pressures of the moment; a duty is the field's grain made obligatory. Care ethics [7] weights the relations of dependence, which are the overlaps of register addresses; to tend a relationship is to tend two registers at once.

Proposition 2 (unification). Utilitarian welfare, virtuous character, deontological duty, and the bonds of care are four measurements of a single quantity, T-flow enhancement. Their long-standing conflict is the conflict of instruments each calibrated to one aspect of the same measurand, and is dissolved once the measurand is identified.

8. Collective and institutional ethics

The criterion scales from persons to collectives without modification. A community is a cluster of conscious register nodes whose addresses overlap and synchronise; social cohesion is the degree of that synchronisation and conflict its failure. The criterion then licenses an assessment of institutions by their net effect on T-flow rather than by output or by the preservation of existing arrangements: an economy is to be evaluated by whether it opens register addresses — whether it enables more conscious beings to sustain and deepen their registers — and a polity by whether its arrangements enhance or suppress the field. On this measure the institutions most closely aligned with the criterion are those that directly restore registers, such as the care of the sick, while arrangements organised around coercion or extraction align poorly (Fig. 4). The claim is not utopian; it is a specification of the quantity

institutions ought to be built to maximise, and a corresponding metric.

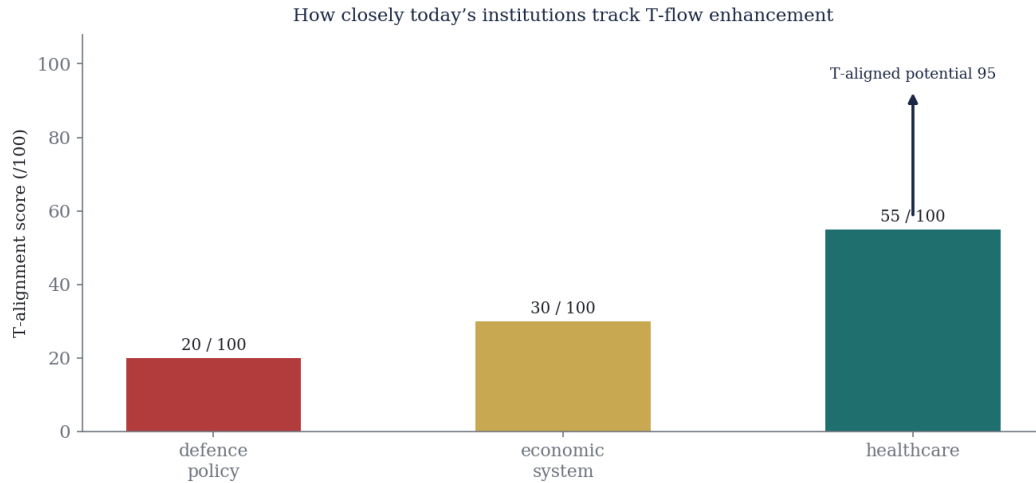


Figure 4. Institutional alignment with the criterion. Representative institutions scored by how far they track T-flow enhancement rather than output. Arrangements that directly restore registers (e.g. care of the sick) score highest and carry the greatest room to rise; coercive and extractive arrangements align poorly.

9. Objections and commitments

Three further objections merit reply. The measurement objection holds that register depth, if real, is not measurable, and the criterion therefore idle. The reply is that a quantity may ground facts before it is precisely measurable, as temperature grounded thermal facts before thermometry; the criterion's ordinal deliverances (that a conscious life outweighs a stone, that Grade 3 harm exceeds Grade 1) are already usable, and the framework's programme is to render the quantity cardinal. The demandingness objection, familiar from utilitarianism, has less purchase here because the criterion grades severity and recoverability and does not require the agent to treat every enhancement as obligatory. The bruteness objection — that the identification of value with register depth is unexplained — is met by noting that every theory terminates in a fundamental identification, and that the present one at least identifies value with an independently motivated physical quantity rather than with a primitive non-natural property. The account's commitments are correspondingly clear: it is committed to the reality and, in principle, the measurability of register depth; to the irreducibility of Grade 3 harm; and to the assessability of institutions by the net-register calculus. Each is a point at which the theory may be pressed.

10. Conclusion

The account grounds moral value in an objective physical quantity — register depth in the T-field — and derives from a single evaluative criterion a graded taxonomy of harm, a restorative theory of justice, a universalism that refutes normative relativism while granting its descriptive basis, and a unification of the four

normative traditions as measurements of one measurand. It meets the is-ought and open-question objections by construing the identification of the good with register depth as a synthetic a posteriori identity rather than a conceptual analysis, and it is thereby a naturalistic moral realism whose fate is tied to the framework's prior physics of value. Its central claim may be put without hedging: right and wrong are features of the register structure of a living universe, and the moral categories we inherited are a first, imperfect measurement of them.

References and notes

- [1] D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Bk III — the derivation of "ought" from "is".
- [2] G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (1903) — the open-question argument and the naturalistic fallacy.
- [3] J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (1977) — error theory and moral relativism, taken here as representative anti-realism.
- [4] J. Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789); J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863).
- [5] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* — virtue as settled excellence of character.
- [6] I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) — duty and the categorical imperative.
- [7] C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (1982); N. Noddings, *Caring* (1984) — the ethics of care.
- [8] Universal Force of Time, propositions P-ETH-1 ... P-ETH-4 (evaluative axiom, grades of harm, justice as restoration, universality) and the identification of value with register depth. T is the sole substance, conserved by $d\Sigma T = 0$. See the Master theory of the Universal Force of Time.

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