

Animal Absolutes: Liberation Sociology's Missing Links

Part II of II essays on animals and normative sociology

David Sztybel¹

Even if we were to admit that there might exist, in fact in moral life a law which is more general than any others of which these latter are no more than different forms and particular applications, it would still be necessary, in order to discover it, to follow the conventional scientific method.

— Emile Durkheim

...formerly metaphysical ideas of liberation may become the proper object of science.

— Herbert Marcuse

While the natural sciences and the humanities are able to live side by side, in mutual indifference if not in mutual admiration, the social sciences must resolve the tension between the two approaches and bring them under one roof.

— Jurgen Habermas

Abstract: It is understandable that the prospects for a “scientific” ethic should be dismissed, but the real test seems to be whether ethics can at least to some extent be articulated through citing evidence for hypotheses without relying on intuitions (fundamental beliefs thought by intuitionists not to require any justification). The case against intuitionism is spelled out with no fewer than nine major objections to such a methodology. Part 1 demonstrated that positive normative sociology (which asserts moral norms and values such as sympathy or justice) is mired in intuitionism, but need this be the case? Best caring sociology is sketched using not only a rigorous justification of hypotheses, but a system whose general ideas logically flow from a single normative imperative: the best caring principle. The key to the success of best caring is animal absolutes, e.g., that for all sentient beings, pain feels bad, and this affords affective cognition of bad in sentient beings’ lives. Best caring forms a kind of liberation sociology (which is argued to be a better global label than critical theory among other possibilities), but without the moral relativity and total animal neglect of Feagin and Vera, and with a better explication as to why a holistic descriptive focus is most salutary for social science. Best caring promotes individual rights, a firm commitment to nonharming, and anti-exploitation including for animals. Indeed, the

¹ David Sztybel received his doctorate in animal ethics in 2000. C.V. and writings appear on his website at <http://sztybel.tripod.com/home.html> . Contact: david.sztybel@gmail.com

commitments of the positive normative sociologists considered in Part 1 are often vindicated by the logic of the best caring principle, which is justified including with reference to various important background hypotheses or beliefs. Best caring claims to further broad-based sociological values better than ethical relativism. These values include scientific justification, pragmatic efficiency, anti-oppression, not getting lost in “free-floating” abstractions, attention to cultural context, honoring diverse voices, and anti-ethnocentrism as well as anti-authoritarianism. Furthermore, best caring provides the theoretical resources to rebut negative normative sociologists’ objections such as the alleged logical “gap” between facts and values, and the supposedly nonempirical nature of ethics. Two kinds of neutrality are distinguished, and best caring is shown to exemplify scientific neutrality whereas animal-oppressive views involve a prejudiced, strictly denial-based form of “neutrality.” 14 key advantages of best caring social science over previous versions of normative sociology are outlined by way of conclusion.

Introduction

Many will dismiss right away the idea that normative ethics could ever be “scientific.” Such a proposal may immediately be cast aside, through a reflex action, as *pseudo-science*. However, such a reaction is prejudicial, and prejudice posing as (social) scientific judgment truly *is* pseudo-scientific. As Laurence Peter once penned: “Prejudice is one of the world’s greatest labor-saving devices; it enables you to form an opinion without having to dig up the facts.” (Peter, in Robbins, 1987, p. 155) I need to insist on sociologists keeping an open mind, since many thinkers have become more or less closed to normative sociology, even though, as I showed in Part 1, normative sociology has been a silent partner of sociology since the beginning, waiting in the wings to be theoretically developed from various standpoints. Moreover, skeptics of universal norms cannot rightly evade normative sociology: positive normative sociologists need to justify their *assertion* of rationalistic norms, and negative normative sociologists need to justify their *denial* of such norms.

Now the version of the scientific method that I use is evaluating hypotheses in terms of evidence. For someone to say *in scientific terms* that my ethics is unscientific, they would have to substantiate the hypothesis that I myself do not transact my ethics in terms of hypotheses supported by evidence. It would be impossible to substantiate this nay-sayer’s hypothesis, I argue, since I do indeed apply exactly this scientific method to ethics. If I were to fail to establish an ethic that rational people ought to

agree with, though, we would still need a scientific approach to ethics. A rationalist ethic is supportable by the evidence—or not. So far from it being “strange” to apply the scientific method to ethics, it is in some ways hard to escape such a methodology, whether one’s results be negative or positive in the relevant sense of “no” or “yes.”

I am not urging that every sociologist needs to investigate normative sociology, only that the discipline of sociology as a whole requires such studies (which already exist in some form as we have seen in Part 1) and sociologists, to have complete systems of thought, would at the very minimum need to “sign on” with someone else’s normative sociology work. Sociologists are sometimes allergic to what they call “grand theory,” such as Talcott Parsons’ views. I am not setting out to do “grand” theory but only as little or as much as the evidence warrants. Indeed, *justification* of normative views in sociology is crucial. For example, Marxist sociology takes a normative stance of advocating a proletarian revolution. However, we cannot just *assume* that we need globalized violence—the *justifications* for competing visions of liberation are crucial.

Scientific Method

I mentioned that the scientific method I am using is evaluating evidence for competing hypotheses. I will not digress into an extensive discussion of the scientific method. However, I will note that hypotheses can be validated as certainly true, probable, improbable, or clearly false. One could refer to the *rigorous* justification of hypotheses, but that would be redundant since I am speaking of what is truly justified, not to what some wrongly consider to be justified. One does not need absolutely to prove a hypothesis to provide it with support (a fact that we saw in Part 1 is exploited by sociologist Raymond Boudon (2004, pp. 37, 38, 51; 2001, p. 112) in his offering of a loosely defended conception of ethics). At the same time, I like many others call for rigorous standards of justification.

The scientific method is *at least* considering evidence in support of hypotheses, since any practice that did not do this would obviously fail to be scientific. There might be add-ons, such as the principle of parsimony (or keeping one’s assumptions to a minimum, and generally preferring theoretical simplicity to complication). Actually,

it is becoming to exercise parsimony in formulating the scientific method itself. My own normative ethic seems to accord well with the parsimony ideal, since best caring, we will see, is reasoned based on the primary normative principle that I call the best caring principle (see below). Science does not require *oversimplification* though. Consider even the holy grail of science, a unified field theory. While such a sought-for system might be “simple” in some sense, it would also have to embrace all of the complexities that exist. In seeking rigorous justification I will try to provide evidence in support of my statements as true, and arguments in which the premises logically entail the conclusion(s) given. Every competing theory is a set of ideas that constitutes a counter-hypothesis (which may systematize numerous subhypotheses), and objections are also counter-hypotheses that need to be considered.

I refuse the validity of “defining” ethics out of science by “essentializing” science as value-neutral, or as *traditionally* nonevaluative, or as only investigating the material world, or as the result of *only* applying the five senses—such dogmas should be treated as hypotheses which I will find are not supportable by the best reasons in the end. Is there good evidence that we should eschew the Weberian tradition of value-neutrality? I argue in the affirmative. Or that we should go beyond the five senses as Weber himself did in imaginatively seeking to understand social action from agents’ “internal” points of view? (Weber, 1962, p. 29) At worst my approach is *quasi*-scientific, I contend, rather than *pseudo*-scientific, since I doubt that anyone will be able to show that I do not proceed on the basis of supporting hypotheses with reference to rigorously interpreted evidence. If it were impossible to justify an ethic using such a scientific method, then we would have to make the world better by dimmer lights than such a method. For example, we saw in Part 1 that sociologist Bryan Turner (2006) emphasizes that no matter what the moral skeptics say, we are all vulnerable, and that, combined with some sympathy, may be enough on which to base a conception of rights.

The Actual, the Possible, and the Ideal

Society can be investigated at the level of the actual, the possible, and the ideal. What I am stressing in this paper is the ideal, although it goes without saying that

investigating social actualities and possibilities is of core relevance to sociology. It is usually assumed by sociologists that the ideal is purely (inter)subjectively determined, and is as irreducibly varied as are opinions on the matter. While that is a plausible view, I do not think it is the best or even most scientific view. I realize such a claim will be startling, or perhaps even offensive, to some. I merely ask that my claims not be prejudicially dismissed.

It is not controversial that science can investigate certain questions of ethics: (1) surveys to determine who subscribes to what ethical norms; (2) determining the most effective or efficient means to certain ethical ends. What is really controversial is whether there are absolute values or norms that apply cross-culturally. Some anthropologists, such as May and Abraham Edel, do find a universal deploring of murder, rape, incest, some kind of valuing of loyalty, control of aggression, expecting truth in certain cases such as oaths and meeting obligations in return for goods and services. (Edel and Edel, 1968, p. 28) Also, they allege that there is a common overarching goal of satisfaction or fulfillment. (*Ibid.*) Others, however, might find that no universal agreement in ethics is possible, even among so-called “reasonable” people. Hence anthropologist Ruth Benedict writes: “...all our local conventions of moral behavior...are without absolute validity.” (Benedict, 1985, p. 473) We need to be careful, however, to distinguish that we are not necessarily looking for norms that are now in fact globally subscribed to—the actual. What is important to determine is whether there are norms that everyone *should* agree with as reasonable people—the ideal. But that would be partly because intrinsic goods and bads for sentient beings are actual, as is the preferability of the best out of all possible choices, as I will substantiate below.

The Sense of Moral Absolutism

This discussion raises issues of terminology. There are several proposed dualities that are commonly used by English-speakers in the context of ethics: absolutism versus relativity, universalism versus nonuniversalism, objectivity versus subjectivity, cognitivism versus noncognitivism, and moral realism versus moral anti-realism. I will defend why I generally prefer the first pair. The real issue is whether rational

agents should find absolutes that should hold cross-culturally. If there are no such absolutes, then what are *called* moral absolutes only exist relative to different cultures or individual points of view. Moral considerations might be absolute in a limited sense for a given society or a given person's life, but if ethical relativism is true, there would be no reason to think that proposed absolutes should be applied across all of humanity. I speak in terms of absolutes pertaining to life on Earth as we know it. I do not necessarily speak of "universals" in terms of what should apply across the whole *universe*, even as far as other star systems or in other dimensions that some scientists postulate. It seems to me that our awareness does not extend that far, so I do not choose to speak of *universals* in the literal sense. (We can speak loosely, poetically, or politically of universal rights, though, since that is a rhetoric which does indeed fire the popular imagination.)

What about objectivity versus subjectivity? The subjective seems to refer to the mind, but why cannot there be absolutes about the mind? For example, the perceptual capacity of any given human being is absolutely limited, whatever exactly that limit might happen to be. I will argue that we can speak of absolutes that are true of subjective states, for example, that all forms of pleasure feel good. The next diad, cognitivism versus noncognitivism, refers to states of knowledge or awareness. But knowledge of what? We could *perhaps* know or find to the best of our awareness that ethics is strictly *relative*. The real question is whether we can have knowledge of *absolutes*, so I will use the more fundamental term of absolutism. Finally, there is moral realism versus anti-realism. Yet if moral relativism is true, moral views or moral values are still *real*. Again, the underlying question is whether moral *absolutes* are real, hence my choice of terminology.

Liberation Sociology

Joe Feagin's and Hernan Vera's book, *Liberation Sociology* (2001), as with the founders of critical theory (Horkheimer and Adorno), is indebted to Marx (Feagin and Vera, 2001, p. 264) and calls for an end to sociology's flight from moral and ethical issues. (*Ibid.*, p. 25) Coincidentally, I independently formulated the concept, "liberation sociology," before discovering their work. The authors, partly out of

empathy with the victims of oppression, (*Ibid.*) “unabashedly” draw from Enlightenment, modernist, postmodernist, feminist, neo-Marxist, and anarchist sources. (*Ibid.*, p. 2) Do they not perceive any contradiction between the *rationalism* of the Enlightenment and modernism on the one hand, and the *anti-rationalism* of postmodernism on the other (also, many versions of feminism rebel against rationalism as “patriarchal”)? The *statism* of Marxism and *anti-statism* of anarchism? They claim that “[l]iberation sociology does not seek to establish certainty for all time,” (*Ibid.*, p. 23) thus disowning absolutism, although they should not presume to speak for all liberation sociologists. (That said, neither do I make claims for all eternity—see below.) They seem to dismiss ethical absolutism in any form as “abstract or doctrinaire,” (*Ibid.*, p. 2) and as “grand theory.” (*Ibid.*, p. 196) In the poverty of theory that they offer, they do not shore up liberation but rather undermine it. (See Part 1 for an explication of how ethical relativism undermines commitments to liberation.)

Feagin and Vera do not even *mention* animals in their book. I have argued elsewhere that speciesism exists. (Sztybel, 2006b, pp. 1-6) Animal liberation at least needs to be an open *question* for liberation sociology, and animal rights can be justified to be a part of acceptable answers too, as I argue. Human liberation is concerned with insults to: (1) liberty; (2) autonomy; (3) well-being; (4) length of life; (5) freedom to die with dignity; (6) having a healthy environment; and (7) treating females as other than reproductive engines, among other issues. The fact is, all of these considerations apply to and are desirable for nonhuman animals. To deny animal liberation, then, is to deny the importance of these factors in a way. If the deniers were to be consistent, they would rule out concern for *human animals* in these respects too. Human liberation, then, might not even be fully intelligible if we sincerely deny animal liberation. That is also true because humans need to be liberated not only as *recipients* of goods, but as moral *agents* who seek liberation—including I argue animal liberation. Otherwise, liberation could not occur without agents to create it. Racists are not fully “liberated” either. However, I would rather say “liberation sociology” than “animal liberation sociology” since the latter term might suggest a more or less exclusive focus on nonhuman animals.

Is animal liberation at odds with liberation for Aboriginal peoples who hunt? Such hunting is often contextually different from killing largely for pleasure. Natives should have no less freedom to choose to eat meat than urbanites. As well, Native self-government would mean that if other governments outlaw animal oppression, Natives would not necessarily have to follow suit right away. Such governmental arrangements might be entailed by a general respect for cultural preferences (see below). These remarks, of course, do not constitute an endorsement of hunting.

Unlike Feagin and Vera, I argue that liberation sociology is a better label than critical theory, social justice theory, or *general-orientation* labels such as Marxist, feminist, or ecofeminist (although I am indeed a feminist, it is not my *overall* identifier-label). *Critical theory* is amorphous and states that one opposes other views (which are *also* inevitably “critical” by the way) rather than specifying what one *stands* for. Critical thinking skills are important, but they still constitute too basic and ubiquitous a skill-set to be the object of an overriding, distinctively focused movement. We also saw that actual critical theory succumbs to a variety of important objections. People need to be most assertive about liberation for it to enjoy the most possible success. Advocates of liberation should certainly be comfortable with the label of liberation sociology, and anti-liberationists of various sorts should be happy at least to debate liberation sociology with respect for others’ intellectual freedoms. *As for social justice*, all justice is social: equity is never asocial let alone anti-social. Also, many conceptions of “justice” are hidebound conservative rather than liberationist. Feminism as a *global* label (that describes one’s entire stance) explicitly points only to liberation of the female sex; Marxism only announces concern with proletarians above all; and ecofeminism (perhaps the broadest other label since it embodies *two* concerns) is only explicit about the environment and feminism. Part of the point of liberation is avoiding the injustice of arbitrary favoritism or domination by special-interest-groups. However, that is precisely what the narrower labels seem to be guilty of. Now many who adhere to these blinkered global labels advocate an end to *all* oppression, typically, but we need to fix the way we talk as well as the way we walk so that we can be more aptly holistic. Liberation sociology includes all of the concerns of these other global labels and much more: anti-ageism, anti-ableism, anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, anti-transphobia, and so on. Whether or not my best caring framework is accepted, it is part of a desirable liberation sociology discourse.

Anti-Intuitionism

Intuitions in ethics are rock-bottom beliefs that are thought by intuitionists not to admit of any justification, and furthermore, no justification is required by these thinkers. Skeptics might agree that intuitions lie at the bottom of moral theories, but point out that the lack of justification is inadequate. An example is that a utilitarian will intuit that we ought to maximize the good and minimize the bad overall. Why do I argue that we must rigorously reject intuitionism, even though I am not a moral skeptic?

- (1) I contend that it is pseudo-scientific to depend on intuitions, since the scientific method above all seeks to determine which hypotheses are shown to be true strictly by appeal to *evidence*. Intuitions are held even if no evidence for them can be produced, and even if it is unconvincing to maintain that they are self-evidently true.
- (2) Intuitions are essentially personal judgments, which vary across individuals, and so they cannot dictate what is impersonally true, even though intuitive statements such as those of the utilitarians pose as absolutely right. Intuitions are thus disguised appeals to personal prejudice, as Peter Singer among others have argued. (Singer, 1980, p. 327) They are arbitrarily asserted dogmas.
- (3) The plurality of theoretical intuitions makes intuitionism utterly indecisive as a method, but if intuitions are appealed to in order to settle *conflicts* of intuitions, that is even more hopelessly circular, biased or prejudicial, and at best calls upon people to be irrational conformists.
- (4) Intuitionism is like jumping to a conclusion to start off one's moral theory, and then carefully deducing conclusions from the intuitions in order to make it *seem* as though one is not jumping to conclusions after all.
- (5) Intuitions provide *evidence of* beliefs but not *reasons for* beliefs. They fail to be logically articulate, which is one of the chief goals of theory in general.

- (6) Since intuitions are not demonstrably grounded in reality, they are “free-floating abstractions” in the undesirable sense.
- (7) Sometimes people refer to abstract theories as “irrefutable hypotheses” and “with an answer for everything,” but that could only be the case if one allows *ad hoc* intuitions to answer problems, or else intuited assumptions are said to have a logical implication for every question. If intuitions are disallowed in social scientific ethics, then intuitionists ethics go from having answers to everything to a lack of worthwhile answers. Best caring does not claim to have answers to everything, by the way, but only enough to be substantially guiding.
- (8) Max Weber refers to a rational-legal basis for authority in contrast to traditionalism and charismatic leadership, (Weber, 1947, p. 328) but if intuition is all there is, then perhaps there is no fully rational basis for laws to be had.
- (9) Battles between intuitions may not be settled peaceably, and can lead to fighting or even warfare, without any “force of reason” to end deep or intuitive disputes.

What would intuitionism look like in the sciences? Let us say one wished to study the effect of air-resistance on the speed of projectiles. One might just “intuit” how much the air will retard the progress of moving objects, which would be absurd. Or an “intuitive” social scientist might “intuit” that only a minority of society’s members are authoritarian in personality, although that would be a question requiring evidence based on observation, and also a rigorous examination of concepts. It may be fine and well initially to form hypotheses intuitively. That is because quantitatively, the brain often works more swiftly than by painstakingly rendering explicit all inferences and evidence, and qualitatively, the mind often works subconsciously or preconsciously. However, intuited information can only retain theoretical pride of place insofar as such ideas can be *justified*.

In my findings, all ethical theories thus far rely on intuitions. For example:

	Ethical Theory Type	Sample Intuitions (varies with particular type)
(1)	act utilitarianism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pleasure is good and pain is bad 2. We ought to maximize pleasure and minimize pain overall (Williams, 1985, p. 105)
(2)	rights views	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individuals have a dignity which even the good of society cannot override 2. Everyone has a right, say, to life, liberty, and well-being (overt intuitionists include Regan, 1983 and Nussbaum, 2001)
(3)	ethical egoism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People are not obliged to find it overall desirable to act ultimately for anyone else than themselves. 2. It is in everyone's self-interest always to observe certain rules such as not killing, breaking promises, lying, etc. (Hobbes, 2008; Gauthier, 1986)
(4)	moral relativity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are no moral absolutes. 2. We should respect all the variety of ethical views that there are.

These are merely examples. Rights views need not be *explicitly* based on intuitions. They can appeal to tradition or common-sense (Sapontzis, 1987; Rollin, 1981), but since there are a variety of traditions, an intuitive choice among them can be detected. If rights are supposed to be based on compassion—Dunayer (2004) for her part, bases rights on compassion and justice—it is possible to have compassion for others and to be a utilitarian or even an ethical egoist, so one must then *intuitively* favor rights in the end. Kant's theory of rights is based on intuitions since he declares the test of a moral principle to be its universalizability, but since one can universalize *any* ethical

principle, one must intuitively choose amongst them. (Kant, 1956; Franklin, 2005) Gewirth's theory of rights is subtly intuitionist in that he claims that each individual must declare *rights* to well-being and freedom for oneself, even though such a move is not strictly necessary. In other words, such a move seems intuitively right to Gewirth. Additionally, Gewirth states that "the principle of generic consistency" requires awarding rights to others. However, that principle vacuously means only being consistent about kinds of things. All major theories are so consistent, so one must intuitively select among the theories. (Gewirth, 1978; Pluhar, 1995; Cavalieri, 2000) Rawls' theory of rights is also covertly intuitive. He maintains that we should imagine ourselves not yet born, as free spirits. We do not know, in the "original position," if we will be born rich or poor, "black or white," very intelligent or not, male or female, etc. So that would presumably cause us to formulate principles of justice or rights that are not racist, sexist, classist, etc. (Rawls, 1971; Rowlands, 1998; Rowlands, 2002; Bernstein, 1998) However, *any* principles technically can be formulated in the original position, including utilitarian ones for example, so there is intuitive selection in the original position too. There is anti-oppressive and anti-utilitarian intuition also in rigging the theorist's position as Rawls does to encourage a kind of individualistic equality. Therefore, all prominent human and animal rights views are either overtly or covertly intuitionist.

I could hardly blame any sociologist who sets aside all previous ethical theories on the grounds that they are intuitionist. Such systems perhaps *need* to be swept aside as not guaranteeing any moral absolutes, but merely as unconvincingly *declaring* them to be the case. There is something profoundly alienating about everyone believing in their various intuitions, meanwhile more or less expecting that all others should agree. That is called dogmatism, the very opposite of science. Is not *justification* what science affirms above all in its traditional flight from superstition for example? Intuitionism is a hat out of which any moral rabbit can be pulled. So sociology has evolved as it has, scrupulously excluding ethics from social science, for very good reason. Ethical theories as they "intuitively" exist do not qualify as scientifically defensible. However, I will argue that ethical theory need not at all rely on intuitions, but rather on alternative modes of cognition that we all engage in, but do not always accept in our theorizing for a variety of unconvincing reasons. I will contend that the best form of liberation sociology is also liberated from the dogmatism of intuitionism.

However, as we have seen, ethical theory as it exists in both sociology and philosophy is rife with intuitionism, both declared and undeclared.

Rejecting intuitionism has consequences not only for those who assert ethical norms. It also means that one cannot *reject* ethical absolutism merely intuitively. The fact that there is a variety of ethics in different cultures, as Lukes indicated in Part 1, does not logically entail that there are no moral absolutes. To come to that conclusion based on such insufficient evidence would be intuitionist, however covert. Also, separating is and ought (or the actual/possible and the ideal) does not prove that the ideal is impossible; that must be intuited if all that is premised is this distinction which is common in both absolutist and relativistic discourse. (That said, lack of evidence for moral absolutism would be highly favorable to negative normative sociology.)

Best Caring

My moral theory, best caring, is absolutist, or maintains that many aspects of the moral life are evidently determined by impersonal truths. That is, we can systematically formulate ethics as a series of hypotheses for which we can find convincing evidence, and rebut objections compellingly, just as is the case with scientific hypotheses. This is part of the Enlightenment Project, which saw that not only physics but the moral life can be governed by reason, although such a stance by no means implies affective insensitivity. Moral absolutes are tempting since without them, one can say that there really is no such thing as oppression. I have been working on an original theory of ethics for some 21 years now, and in my hard search for non-intuitively based moral absolutes, I will not say that I have come up with nothing.

We must not declare *anything* absolutely without sufficient evidence, but rather judge among competing hypotheses on the basis of warrant. Accordingly, we cannot intuitively adjudicate between the hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There are absolute values or norms.

versus

Hypothesis 2: There are no absolute values or norms.

Simply choosing between Hypotheses 1 and 2 does not, so far, turn on any *argument* providing *evidence* for absolute values or norms. There are absolutes that we accept in science: all mammals need oxygen to survive, and all triangles' internal angles total 180 degrees in a Euclidean system. I will argue that there are other absolutes too, including indispensable *animal absolutes*.

Best caring starts from the best caring principle as the primary normative principle. All other normative principles flow logically from the best caring principle. That first principle runs as follows:

Hypothesis 3: We should pursue, promote and protect what is best.

(See also Sztybel, 2006b, p. 13) Do I just affirm this hypothesis intuitively? No. It is *logically* true that anything other than the best is either greater or lesser. Yet greater than the best is logically impossible, and less than the best is logically less desirable. Preferring something because it has more good or less bad is not merely preferring something "intuitively." It is preferring on the basis of what is better or worse. This is not to say that there is *no reason* to do other than the best, only that the best logically has the *best reasons* on its side. I think that this hypothesis therefore satisfies the critique from anti-intuitionism. The best is really about being as *effective* as possible in promoting good and avoiding bad. Thus, these insights about Hypothesis 3 are based in "effective cognition," or awareness (in this case, of what is better or worse) in terms of cause-and-effect. The best *must* mean promoting the most good and least bad since having less good or more bad would logically disqualify something from being considered truly best. However, promoting what is "best" would be a hollow or purely formal endeavor if good and bad are unreal, as skeptics maintain, or if values are only intelligible relative to different individuals or cultures. So the best caring principle needs some background hypotheses to be justified as right

if it is to be meaningful, and in fact still other background hypotheses are needed to better clarify the meaning that it has. These background hypotheses, we will see, crucially include *animal absolutes*.

One set of background hypotheses for the best caring principle is that intrinsic good and bad are real. There are at least two kinds of intrinsic good or bad that I find to be real: ones based in feelings and ones based in desires.

Consider the following competing hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: We can be aware of pleasure as an absolute intrinsic good.

and

Hypothesis 5: We cannot be aware of pleasure as an absolute intrinsic good.

If we judged among these hypotheses intuitively, that would be utterly inconclusive. Therefore we will investigate by using a mode of cognition or awareness by which we can judge good or bad. I propose that there is such a thing as *feeling cognition*. (Szybel, 2006b, p. 18) That is, we are aware of our feelings not through the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, but simply by *feeling*. Feeling cognition allows us to consciously feel—period—and also to know *how* we feel. Based on feeling cognition, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Pleasure feels good.

Now a competing hypotheses that I would decisively rule out:

Hypothesis 7: Pleasure feels other-than-good—that is, bad or indifferent.

I put it to the reader that pleasure never feels bad or indifferent. I assert that Hypothesis 6 is overwhelmingly evident: pleasure feels good. Everything in our experience accords with such an idea and nothing tells against it. That is why we can

formulate a clear concept of pleasure in the first place. In this awareness there is straightforward cognition of goodness, and it is not intuited, but rather based on feeling cognition. Similarly, it is overwhelmingly evident that blue is a color. Again, this is true not merely conceptually but categorically describes any of our actual and possible life *experiences* that we may deem relevant. Similarly, I can confirm another animal absolute:

Hypothesis 8: Pain feels bad.

Through feeling cognition, I can affirm this overwhelmingly evident hypothesis. It is odd that science accepts that the sense of *smell* is a form of cognition that is admissible, but not how one *feels*. Or the sense of feeling through touch is allowed, but mysteriously, not our sense of feeling that is more psychological. And no real reason is ever given for these essentially arbitrary inconsistencies. How scientific is that? Awareness of good and bad, nonintuitively, however, is no mean thing. It is a *partial* basis for saying that some things are absolutely good or absolutely bad, and that some things are really better or worse.

What about masochists? First, the masochist does not disprove that pleasure feels good and pain feels bad. Masochists never “torture” themselves with pleasures, such as if they enjoy eating certain desserts. They always inflict pain on themselves since they want to feel badly, either out of self-hatred or enjoyment of the idea of “discipline” or whatever. So they reveal no instability in what I have hypothesized.

The closest thing to acknowledging feeling cognition in sociology, that I am aware of, occurs in a book edited by sociologist Jack Barbalet, *Emotions and Sociology*, but he only emphasizes emotions as *motivating* and thus providing “...a necessary link between social structure and social action.” (Barbalet, 2002, p. 4) However it is typical that in Barbalet’s collection, Mabel Berezin refers to the emotions as “noncognitive” (p. 33) and Charlotte Bloch notes how emotions are usually thought of as impeding scientific cognition, (p. 113) but without elaborating on this idea.

I have pointed to nonintuitive awareness of intrinsic good and bad. *I am not saying that all pleasures count morally*. They merely feel good to the individuals who have

them. We will see that the primary normative principle (with which, I argue, all ethical findings should cohere) actually *rules out* many pleasures, but more on that below. There is another nonintuitive basis for value judgments:

Hypothesis 9: Desire-satisfaction is of positive interest or value to the desirer.

If we were to dispute this, it would be pretending that things are of neutral value in relation to desires, which is false. To desire something *is* to value it in a pro-active way, and to wish to realize the thing in question, unless that is overruled by, e.g., what is possible, ethics, or competing desires. Denying such value would be denuding the world of the positive value that sentient beings experience when their desires are satisfied, no more and no less. Then there is a related hypothesis:

Hypothesis 10: Desire-frustration is of negative interest or value to the desirer.

Similar remarks apply. Frustration is a reaction to a thwarting of what is valued. Discounting the importance of desire-frustration would also tend to add to the real frustrations of this world without as much reliable or principled relief. Again it is not “intuition” that reveals a negative experience for frustrated desirers, but the experience of frustration itself. To maintain that desires are of *neutral* value, it would have to be asserted that the will is neutral in relation to different objects, which is patently false. Please note that desires as indicators of value were not endorsed in Szybel 2006b, and also that I am not saying that everything desired is of *ethical* or normative value—again, do the given desires cohere with the primary normative principle?

Sentient beings have both feeling and desiring cognition. Sentience just refers to being able to sense, and while it is often defined in terms of the ability to experience pleasure and pain, (e.g., Singer, 1993) it can just as well refer to sensing what it is to have one’s desires met or frustrated too. Perhaps “sentience” prefigures a cultural need to go beyond the five senses with affective cognition, since affect is also *sensed*.

These background hypotheses in relation to the best caring principle are justifiable independently of that principle itself. However, the background hypotheses are not normative principles, and so do not occur directly in a system of normative principles, except, as we have here, in the capacity of background or ancillary hypotheses. It can be argued to be *practically* “best” to advocate the truth of all of the background hypotheses, but they are still justifiable independently as I have argued.

Another background hypothesis in relation to the best caring principle is:

Hypothesis 11: Intrinsic (dis)values are separately significant to each and every sentient being.

This idea also can be independently justified. What is pleasant for one person is not necessarily so for another. Even if two are pleased by a show, the pleasure of each is separate and indeed different. We are all unique. This separateness is based simply in the separate *minds* of moral recipients (i.e., those who are on the receiving end of actions by moral agents). This is a reckoning using effective cognition because it is simply the observation that good and bad have effects on individuals *separately*. This background hypothesis is utterly crucial for understanding the best caring principle. For it means that promoting what is best in general means not promoting the best for everyone at once, since it is not the case that everyone is affected as a unity. Rather, the best in general must mean, irreducibly, what is best for you, best for me, best for this individual, that individual, etc., up to and including all of the individual sentient beings involved. This background hypothesis is not acknowledged, let alone respected, by utilitarianism, which judges the best overall to be the addition of everyone’s units of pleasure, say, subtracting everyone’s units of pain. Best caring, by contrast, while not egoistic, is individualistic in emphasizing everyone’s separate share of justice. And this finding is rooted in the justifiability of Hypothesis 11.

Note also another, related hypothesis:

Hypothesis 12: Values are ultimately significant in relation to sentient beings rather than mindless things.

This is related to 11. Nothing matters to any mere thing, be it material or mental, e.g., an idea. This is rooted in effective cognition too since in terms of things being significant to recipients, there is simply no such effect on mindless things. This helps to dignify sentient beings as ends in themselves, to use a Kantian term. Does this mean, then, that sentient beings are the ultimate “principle” of ethics, if we ultimately act for them? I do not think so. Sentient beings are not *principles*. All ethical significance is in relation to sentient beings (including the primary normative principle itself), but we have to figure out what that significance is, since *anything at all* can be significant to sentient beings, for better or worse. Merely determining that things matter only to sentient beings does not tell us how to act normatively. The *best* significance for sentient beings, by contrast, seems to be rationally required by the best caring principle. Therefore, sentient beings as ultimate ends in themselves—acting ultimately for them—is quite consistent with best caring as an ultimate normative principle. We must not confuse what is ultimate in terms of different kinds of reality: where significance ultimately ends up in the universe, and which normative principle for ideally ordering situations is ultimate.

I have already commented somewhat on the justificatory role of background beliefs. Again, they are not themselves normative principles but help to justify or constitute the categorical imperative: the fundamental normative principle in favor of best caring. The best caring principle is not a one-thought wonder. Considerable thinking is required to understand and analyze this rule in the fuller context of reality. The background beliefs, then, are not separate from or completely “external” to the best caring principle, fully understood, but are “analytic” in relation to it. They help to constitute its very sense. However, I am not referring to linguistic analysis (which formally permits any ethics whatsoever), but to the justified analysis of experienced reality, which is more substantive than just the allowances of language. So the background beliefs play a justificatory role in the form of “internal” justification, more or less, although they are based too on reference to “external” reality. It is true that the background beliefs can be independently justified, apart from the principle. It is also *best* to affirm the background beliefs as well as *right*, since they are the best beliefs we can arrive at perhaps, both epistemically, and in terms of creating consequences that are beneficial or not harmful for sentient beings.

A secondary normative principle, after the primary principle of best caring, is:

Hypothesis 13: Promote nonharming in general, and only minimal harming when nonharming is impossible.

(See also Sztybel 2006b, p. 15) This hypothesized normative principle depends on background beliefs as well. One background belief is:

Hypothesis 14: The best is ideally all-good.

(*Ibid.*) This is true because it is always preferable to have a scenario of only good things than it is to have a scenario with bad mixed in, for any individual sentient being. This is yet another finding of effective cognition (how to effectively realize the best or most good/least bad). Even if it is best in a given case to accept a bad thing, as in pain at the dentist, it is still better at other times when dentistry is painless. This justifies a rigorous avoiding of harm as best for any individual. And this nonharming principle will be generalized for *all* sentient beings as part of securing the best in general, or the best for each and every individual.

Now best caring will be further spelled out, more briefly and informally than above (in order to avoid excessive length and tedium). For example, the normative principle to be equitable or just flows from upholding the best in general. Since the latter means promoting what is best for *all* of the sentient beings involved, this means the best for each will be *equally* advocated as part of the best in general. (*Ibid.*, p. 14) Again, this is effective cognition of just what it takes to be most effective or best. Justice though needs a principle of nonharming first, since harmful pleasures or desires will be ruled out as contrary to what is best, (*Ibid.*, p. 19) or at variance with the logical corollary (argued above) of nonharming/minimal harming. A best caring agent would only be interested in fairly distributing goods that embody nonharming, rather than exploitive or sadistic goods, for example.

After the normative principle of justice comes a principle that we should be sympathetic towards others. It is possible to act out a moral code without sympathy, but since things are only significant to sentient beings (nothing matters to mere things—see discussion of Hypothesis 12), we should ultimately direct our actions towards sentient beings, and being *unsympathetic* towards them jeopardizes acting for their good and against what is bad for them. This is effective cognition in the realization that we cannot best promote the best itself except with all key parts of our being, including our own affect. Merely acting ultimately for a principle is fallible because senseless—one cannot do anything for or against a principle or idea any more than one can benefit a book in itself (although one can care for books on behalf of sentient beings who are interested in them). I say that sympathy comes after, since we should best sympathize with moral agents who not only subscribe to nonharming but also equitable values. That said, we should sympathize with what is best for moral incompetents too, and detectives can use empathy with vicious desires of criminals to proper advantage.

Still further normative principles such as rights, duties, and virtues can be justified, also flowing from the primary principle together with relevant background beliefs. These are all arguably effective in promoting the best for each and every sentient being. Someone who did not respect a *duty* not to harm might be more dangerous or thoughtless; someone who refused to acknowledge a *right* to life or who manifests the *vice* of impatience might be less reinforced in terms of ethical conduct than someone fully committed to rights and virtues. That said, some cultures might only have duties but not rights, and in that case, rights might only apply in a cosmopolitan rather than a parochial sense. Friendship and love, which respect moral normative principles flowing from best caring, can also be justified since it is better to have a life with these things, and so such relationships are a part of what is best for all sociable sentient beings. I have kept this account quite brief, but with sufficient remarks to indicate how the best caring framework can be justified nonintuitively—which is not to say *counterintuitively*.

We can keep an open mind that a better first principle may present itself than the best caring principle, but we can be confident with some justification that this will not occur, just because logically, nothing can be better than the best. Now there are

competing background beliefs about intrinsic values. I have effectively ruled out intuited intrinsic values. What about preference-based values? Preferences, in my understanding, are just general *desires* for some things over others in cases in which two or more things might be choices. So a desire-based intrinsic value theory will also rigorously respect preferences. I reject hedonistic intrinsic values for ethics, unlike many forms of utilitarianism, since some pleasures are sadistic or aggressive, and that is contrary to nonharming. Any nonharming goods also need to be considered in an *equitable* way. This rules out honoring just *any* good that one finds to be good, regardless of whether it leads to anything further, since some might value cruelty in precisely that way. Those who deny the role of the good in ethics altogether often advocate duties, such as promise-keeping, but such principles can only be “justified” intuitively if they do not flow from promoting good and avoiding bad. If no justification is given, then we have to assume that intuitionism might be at work. Lists of activities are not viable as contenders for intrinsic value since some will find more worth in, say, artistic endeavours than others, and if one contemplates *any* activities without desires or feelings, one ceases to care about them altogether (as anyone who has experienced or empathized with severe depression knows). So intrinsic value seems linked to feelings and desires quite inextricably. We cannot find things to be good in themselves without also being interested in them through feeling and/or desire. Being utterly uninterested is not a stance for finding *anything* to be good intrinsically. Marx’s materialistic values are ruled out as primary since money or property mean nothing without some kind of interest in them.

There are several advantages for being able to base ethics in a single first principle, as utilitarians do (only differently) as it is easier to reason, focus, communicate, educate, appeal to a broader public, debate, and characterize ethics as scientific since the basic principle elegantly adheres to the principle of parsimony. Indeed, elegance is better for the cause of liberation. Not only does everything flow from the primary principle, which simplifies greatly, but the adherence to the best—as a normative concept—is also a relatively simple idea in terms of content. That said, we have seen that the full meaning of this normative principle involves a number of detailed and clearly specifiable background ideas. There is a sense in which the normative principle stands, and the rest (at the level of generalizations anyway) is commentary—in terms of explication, implications, refutation of contrary views, answering of objections, and

so forth. It is also easier to distinguish what seems most fundamental to ethics using such a stratagem, while being able subsequently to appeal to virtually any dimension of ethics such as rights, duties, virtues, etc.

Single-principle ethics, at least at base, have long been the most attractive to many thinkers. Utilitarianism is the classic example. It is no accident that utilitarians emphasize what is best, after a fashion. Kant claims to affirm only one categorical imperative, although no one has been able to demonstrate how his three alleged “versions” are really the same imperative, i.e., roughly: (1) Act so that your will may be universalizable; (2) Act so that you treat humanity never solely as a means but at the same time as an end in himself/herself; (3) Act according to a possible “kingdom of ends.” (Kant, 1956) Anything can be universalized of course, and merely not using someone as a mere means is scarcely guiding either. The ethics of care vaguely urges the one idea of “caring” overall (although not generally as a *principle*), even though *everyone* cares about something; one can have excessive sympathetic empathy with an axe murderer; and someone might care about some other(s) insufficiently to treat those other(s) justly—among other objections. (cf. Sztybel, 2006b, p. 12) In a way, the best caring principle *vaguely* combines the wisdom of all three single-idea traditions, aiming for the best as in utilitarianism (although in a different way), emphasizing nonharming as Kant in effect does with universalized duties *never* to lie, break promises, kill, steal, etc. (although best caring is not so exceptionless), and of course the best caring principle is fully caring. I said “vaguely” since best caring is not the same as these other views. Also, equivalence of principles need not be impossible on the best caring framework. In a way, the best caring principle, fully articulated, is logically equivalent to all of the principles that can be derived from it as I have indicated. Kant and others were right, I believe, to seek a fundamental normative principle.

Note that my system of ethics is organized around normative principles, rather than “values” (as *axiological* systems are). Axiology is just the study of fundamental values. Now values play a role, which is specified, in best caring. However, any good is not what is ethically promoted *unless* it is a part of what is best for sentient beings. That is because any good may be an unjust benefit from oppression, or something avoidably connected to harming, or selfish and inequitable, the result of

exploitation, and so on. Therefore making the good ultimate seems inappropriate, or indeed not-best, if such a commitment does not further what is best in a way that is compatible with apparently true background beliefs. Also, the best itself is not purely a “good,” except loosely in the sense that it is *valued*, for the best involves not only reference to good *and* bad, but also, unavoidably, a normative principle of action: maximizing good and minimizing bad. So best caring involves no axiology with the best as the basic “value,” strictly speaking.

Given that best caring is rooted in *hypotheses*, does that mean the first principle is not a *categorical imperative* as Kant would have it? This worry confuses two different senses of “hypothetical.” Kant said a hypothetical imperative is of the form: *If* you wish to be well respected *then* you will exercise politeness. These imperatives are about the best means to an end *if* one happens to be committed to the end. We can see how Horkheimer’s contrast between objective and subjective reason (Horkheimer, 1947, pp. 7, 62—see Part 1) resembles Kant’s distinction here. Another sense of “hypothetical” is supporting a *hypothesis* with evidence. My own hypotheses above are social scientific with attention to evidence, but the primary principle proposes a *categorical imperative* that holds not just *if* one aims for the best, but absolutely for all rational agents in a sense. Moreover, the primary principle can be categorical in two senses. Hypotheses can be certainly or categorically true or justified, as an epistemic consideration. Furthermore, if a normative principle is applicable in all situations, then it is categorical in a different sense, i.e., in terms of scope of application. I believe I have found a categorical imperative in the way that Kant himself means, especially in the second sense.

To refuse feeling and desiring cognition as bases for values is unsympathetic towards sentient beings, literally denying them things that figure into what they care about the most. Trying to tell people what they “should” care about an impersonal standard that is intuited would try to make one ultimately act for the principle *itself*, which is impossible and senseless. If instead one “should” care about a standard that *another* sentient being values most, that could well be unjust, or valuing what one sentient being cares about but not another. To deny value altogether through “neutrality” is considered below.

It can be objected that not all affective states present absolutes. Someone might want a football team to win, others might want them to lose, and still others might not care. That is true. But I am not saying anything about all affective states, but only that pleasure feels good and pain feels bad. Furthermore, our affect is part of the world of nature, or a component of the facts of reality, and so is a proper object of scientific investigation and comment. Our feelings and desires cannot be dismissed as nonexistent, insignificant, or in some other dimension. True or false things can be stated about these phenomena based on evidence, even if we do not have direct cognitive access to the minds of others. Affect also has practical implications for the world, including conduct. That is as real as reality gets.

Part of my method in ethics is not just relying on non-intuitive cognition, but also rejecting other normative sociologies insofar as they depend on intuition. An ethical egoist who claims that his view is best is deluded, since the best means the most good and the least bad, and stating that the good is real or significant for oneself alone makes no sense, let alone that such a paltry value constitutes “the most good” in reality. Not only do I sweep aside utilitarian intuitions, but I hold that the best is not just the most pleasure and the least pain overall, which might be used as a utilitarian consideration to rationalize medical vivisection. The harm to the victims is often said to be “outweighed” by harm prevented through treatments and cures developed through such research. Rather, the best is individualized as I have justified, and it is not best for *anyone* to be vivisected. I defend this position elsewhere (Szybel, 2006b) and aim to elaborate still more in forthcoming books on ethics. If what I argue is correct, then in contrast to intuitionist views, best caring is a special theory in the history of thought for being able to withstand the critique from anti-intuitionism.

Not all impersonal truths determine our actions. The weather is real impersonally, but it does not necessarily cause us to go on a walk or not, although that factor may at least influence such a decision. That best caring pleasures are ethically good also does not determine our actions, although that helps us to decide. And avoiding bad that can be avoided also helps us decisively rule out routinely harmful practices, for example. Indeed, all forms of oppression would be negated on a fully nonharming approach. Moreover, anti-oppression goes a good bit of the way—though not entirely—towards *liberation*, the ideal of liberation sociology.

I am not saying there are no areas of moral disagreement just because science may have a role in ethics. Everyone's life is decided not only by impersonal truths but personal decisions are often made that are not dictated by what can be judged to be impersonally best. Some would say that the opposite of science is art, and so leap to the conclusion that whatever cannot be decided scientifically must be "arty." However, I am not pretentiously stating that all personal choices need be works of art, only that such decisions occur in the realm of personal freedom. For instance one can choose to appreciate something, which generally requires slowing down, or to be productive, which might imply speeding things up. It is a personal choice whichever one decides, although it is impersonally true that different speeds may help one's given end-goal. We cannot always quantify good and bad, so thoughtful contemplation and open *discussion* are often very helpful in aiming for "the best." Here we take a leaf from the views of Habermas considered in Part 1.

Liberation sociology that is absolutist, as I defend it, would liberate nonhuman animals from being used for food, clothing, science experiments, entertainment, hunting, etc. As for the top human moral issues, they are all, I find, also related to liberation. There are the usual controversies over anti-liberation or oppression: including racism, sexism, and homophobia. However, capital punishment is a liberation issue too. As with the question of torture, executions concern liberation from excessive punitiveness. The nonharming aspect of best caring ethics is incompatible with capital punishment. Anyone who tells you that punishment by death is compatible with what is best in general, or what is best for everyone as agents and recipients, is not telling the truth, since it is never best for someone to be avoidably killed, other things being equal. On the other hand, it can be best (the most good and the least bad) to be given the freedom to die, in euthanasia cases in which the alternative to that harm is suffering terminally. That said, involuntary (or counter-preferential) killing is murder and that is not best for anyone either. Liberation of speech does not mean allowing inciting to hatred, any more than liberation from violence rules out defense. Sometimes one must choose the least of unavoidable harms. Affirmative action may be needed to get a liberationist society to not only talk the talk but also walk the walk. The welfare state is similarly needed to see that best caring is brought into action and not merely talked about. That said, taxpayers should

not be exploited to sustain others. Conservatism tends to be inimical to a social safety net (which should include environmental protections), and socialism alone seems to guarantee full protection of rights, since even liberal governments, notoriously, can swing either way and validate laws that force citizens, as a commonplace, to choose between buying groceries or paying the rent. Abortion liberates women from reproductive servitude to embryos. In other works, I will argue that not all sentient beings are equal in dilemmas when considering the worth and significance that each being finds in life, and that this is a decisive factor in favor of women's liberation in the abortion issue. That said, I defend equality in normal situations since that is best for all when it can be managed. Anti-infanticide however is about sentient babies' liberation from being murdered. Issues pertaining to the environment, such as curbing excessive resource-consumption and production of pollution, is about liberating current sentient beings and those of future generations from an oppressive physical and aesthetic environment. Spiritual liberation means that one should be respected as an agnostic, atheist, pantheist, animist, polytheist, or monotheist. Thus I find that all the key human moral issues are liberation issues (which I have only loosely commented on here), and the same goes for the most pressing problems pertaining to nonhuman animals.

Liberation sociology of the absolutist type does not necessarily take away anything from descriptive sociology as practiced except dogmatic denials of moral absolutes. I provide evidence for my hypotheses. Everyone can judge for themselves whether they can replicate my findings, and indeed several have already found that they can. I hypothesize that the reason why we have not decided questions of ethics partly on the basis of feeling and desiring cognition is that cultures of speciesism encourage us to be callous, and statements that animals are mindless—whether wholly or by degrees—are in keeping with denying that animals can be *cognitive* through feeling and desiring. Also, sexism is a factor. The stereotype of the stoic male who is unemotional and can controllingly deny all of his desires has influenced what is dominantly valued in sexist cultures around the world. A scientific approach to goodness is also impossible unless we take into account *all* that is good, including for other sentient beings. It might be objected that my good-oriented (but normatively based) ethic begs the question against other forms of ethics, such as rule-based ethics. However, anyone who asserts a rule apart from upholding the best, such as “Do not

kill,” is merely making an intuitive assumption. Intuitionist rule-based ethics cannot be scientific and therefore do not effectively compete with best caring. By contrast, the rule “Do not kill” can be generally supported by best caring and the need to avoid harming quite rigorously. The best caring principle itself is a kind of rule, but it is not a stand-alone one: its very sense is dependent on many independently justifiable background propositions.

Social science has made a great deal of progress but it needs to foster much more. We need seriously to investigate and debate whether ethics of various forms should be added to social science. Moral norms are already examined by sociologists and, as we have seen, asserted by them as well, and what I am doing merely expands the scientific scrutiny of moral norms to a much fuller extent. It is actually unscientific to make the scientific commitment to logic and reliable awareness stop short when investigating whether (and how) we ought to advocate moral norms. Indeed, deeper *descriptions* of moral norms require delving into their ascribed *justifications*, and the logical properties of same, which is also required by the practices of ethics and of course normative sociology. My ethics is still philosophy, but given my rejection of intuitionism (which infects the vast majority of ethics advocated by philosophers, sociologists, and others), intellectual geography places me squarely in social science, which systematically should have no truck with intuitionism. My findings actually go beyond social science to natural science more generally in some respects since affective values naturally exist, regardless of whatever happens to be asserted or denied socially.

My role as a philosopher—and now a writer in social science—teaching sociology at Brock University (at the time of this writing) has forced me to rethink disciplinary boundaries in ways that I have reflected here. However, even if I am wrong in my absolutist version of liberation sociology, that does not eliminate liberation sociology itself. At worst, I would have to revert to a type of liberation sociology that may hinge on little more than sympathy and social democracy, and I would have to concede that ethics is not scientific but merely philosophical after all. However, someone would have to refute my reasoning above (and indeed my full case which I do not have room to broach here) before I would be prepared to concede any such negation of what I have argued. I would suggest that such a refutation is not so easily

done, any more than it is easy to prove that pleasure feels bad or indifferent. After all, knowing the good through feeling and desiring cognition is *part* of the basis of ethics, it seems to me, and without this reference to animal absolutes (or more precisely, sentient absolutes), talk of the “best” would be merely illusory in a sense. Just as sociologists would not have their whole study denied to be “real science” by “hard science” advocates, so ethics itself should not be placed outside of social science without sound *reasoning* to that effect. That might not even be possible, as I argued in Part 1.

Putting Superiorism in Its Lowly Place

In Part 1 I referred to the theory of superiorism as a possible threat to animal rights. According to this theory, one of the goals of ethics is to prefer to realize what is good. It can be argued that it is more worth favoring beings with more goods in their lives who also realize more goods for others. These goods can be quite various, such as autonomy, communication, freedom, moral agency, political participation, rationality, and sociability. Is it best, therefore, to favor those whose lives are richest in goods? I do not have space to treat this idea at length, which is required for a more thorough discussion. (Szybel, 2000) However, superiorism may superficially seem attractive since it is not obviously selfish, allows for a rejection of racism and sexism while apparently discriminating on the basis of goodness (which seems morally relevant) rather than species, and the view has its own theory of justice and animal “welfarist” compassion.

Superiorism is actually inferior in its promotion of the best. There are two possible senses in which beings richer in goods might result in more “worthiness” of being benefited: (1) creating more good consequences (which need not involve merit or desert, although a combined view is possible); and (2) individually deserving or meriting more good. As for (1), best caring creates more good consequences since it realizes more goods for more beings, rather than using a hazardously ranked hierarchy of goodness to *negate* the realization of goodness. It is generally better to benefit *two* people in a given context rather than to benefit only one or the other, as in a dilemma. It would be a *false dilemma* to claim that one “needs” to benefit only one person

because there is more good in that person's life. Likewise avoiding a similar (nameless) fallacy, it is *better* to avoid hierarchy of benefiting when possible in promoting good consequences. Such hierarchy would needlessly negate good just as in the dilemma example.

What about merit? No one can take *credit* for the capacity to have more autonomy, communication, rationality, etc. That is a function of nature. Therefore, it would be illogical to claim that one has more merit based on such capacities. It is best or realizes the most good to say that beings deserve good just for being the kinds of entity who *appreciate* good and bad. Now consider moral agents who *do* virtuously bring about more good in the lives of others. Altruistic people do not get rights and others are denied them in the human realm, and so it would be speciesist—as well as unaltruistic—to deny rights to animals on such grounds. Virtue is its own reward, and people should not necessarily receive selfish “perks” for doing altruistic moral duties. It is simply best to act for the sake of all, not just for ego. That said, economic rewards may be indispensable for society's goals, but those not able to earn money such as the disabled and animals will best have rights too. Punishment may be appropriate for selfish, immature people who fail their duty as an “incentive” to do their part, since moral considerations then prove not enough. Even *if* animals were somehow “punishable,” *no one* should be “punished” by negating all rights—or at least that is not best punishment, realizing the most good and least bad. It is still *best* to respect the basic dignity of immoral agents, *and* of mere recipients who are incapable of moral agency—be they human or other. More to the point, animals seem morally punishable *not at all* (though they may be trained—best *kindly*) since punishment relates to blame or moral responsibility. Even if punishment were applicable, it only applies to isolated “mischievous” actions anyway, not to one's whole *life*. The “merit” (and/or demerit) version of superiorism is thus of no real merit whatsoever. Combining the failed ideas (1) and (2) is no more promising.

Sociological Values and Best Caring

As a form of sociology, best caring embodies certain values embraced by sociologists listed in Part 1, and, I argue, promotes such values better than the ethical relativists:

(1) *Science as a privileged form of knowing.* Social science obviously uses a variant of the scientific method, but so does best caring. Views contrary to best caring may have less scientific merit if they are not rigorously justified hypotheses, e.g., intuitionist views. Best caring is also parsimonious, logically flowing at the general level from the primary principle. As well, this system can progressively change over time, as scientific findings do, in response to better ideas or technology. Ethical relativism by contrast permits anti-scientific cultures or the corruption of scientific practices if that is a favored way to act relative to certain points of view. Such relativists unscientifically allow ethical beliefs to be accepted simply because they *are* accepted.

(2) *Beginning with skepticism.* Best caring reflects this principle too by only accepting hypotheses insofar as they can be strictly justified. Relativists, by contrast, recognize a principle as right for a culture if people in the culture *dogmatically* believe in the idea. One can always be skeptical *in context*, doubting any hypothesis to the extent that it is not rigorously supported by evidence. Skepticism does not need to be all-or-nothing, or perpetual, and in its most credible forms, will not be.

(3) *Not getting lost in abstractions.* All generalizations are based on concrete ideas. The good is no mere abstraction but refers to the realities of feelings and desires (the affective), and what is causally potent, especially in the best degree (the effective). By contrast, ethical relativists admit *whatever abstractions are put forward* so long as they are *believed* in. Intuitionists seem to “reify” ideals since these thinkers cannot base their fundamental notions in reasoning, making ideals seem more baseless or “free-floating” than need be. All important ethical ideas, I have tried to suggest, can be shown to flow from the best caring principle, which, fully articulated, provides “roots” for ethics.

It is also important to realize that ethics is applied in concrete circumstances. Specific details are relevant in ethical decision-making, and salient facts are quite as much premises leading to ethical conclusions just as much as general ideals. The two kinds of premises can be listed in arguments in no particular order of priority. Indeed, facts often need to be known before one can judge which normative principles (chiefly)

apply and in what manner. Irrelevant facts often need to be considered too in order to rule them out as irrelevant, at least for the time being, after due consideration. This paper emphasizes general principles, although the crucial relevance of particular facts could be illustrated using any number of case studies, and are also involved in the next value.

(4) *Pragmatic efficiency.* We can forge a useful distinction between extreme and moderate pragmatism. Traditional philosophy is hardly pragmatic at all in being simply concerned with being good, virtuous, just, and doing one's duty. Nonpragmatist philosophers do not necessarily require being *effective* in a scientific manner. An *extreme pragmatist* only adopts ideals that "work," but this could mean anything, including Nazism and what most effectively realizes its "ideals." *Moderate pragmatism* does not leave the norms of ethics entirely to whatever happens to be expedient, but at the same time, is concerned not just with rationally defending ideals, but also empirically verifying when ideals are (best) met. Part of normative sociology determines what is normative by studying and experimenting with what is most efficient, or what causes and conditions (or variables) are most conducive to particular ends. Such sociological studies are crucial for guiding us. The goods of best caring sociology—things involving pleasure and pain, and desire-satisfaction and -frustration—can be measured to some extent. Techniques, technologies and policies can all be evaluated for effectiveness. Also, ideal forms of life are often unavailable and we must resolve dilemmas, manage scarce goods/resources, and mediate among unavoidable harms and risks. A pragmatic approach is key in such cases. Pragmatism is America's chief contribution to philosophy and sociology, but its extreme form certainly does not safeguard liberation in any way. Pragmatist sociology dominates in North America, and more theoretical approaches are more prominent in Europe, but there is no need for just one or the other—on the contrary. Now ethical relativists can be extreme pragmatists, but their efficiency studies can help to promote egregious practices, for example, and so are not necessarily desirable.

(5) *Anti-oppression.* Many sociologists are opposed to oppression, but ethical relativism equally privileges oppressive views so long as they are *believed*. Best caring is unequivocally anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-speciesist, anti-homophobic, anti-biphobic, anti-transphobic, anti-ableist, anti-ageist, and so on. It is also anti-

ethnocentric (see below) and opposed to cultural imperialism in a postcolonial world. Consider best caring's respect for preferences or wishes. Customs can be regarded as cultural habits, or cemented group preferences (although they can change over time and interpenetrate cross-culturally). Nonharming and equitable cultural preferences have to be respected on best caring, although ethical relativists must equally respect intolerant and empire-expanding cultural beliefs, according to the logic of that doctrine.

(6) *There is no single best way to live.* The fact that best caring shows that things are significant in relation to each and every individual, and honours various individual preferences and feelings attendant to diverse personalities, entails that there is no generic best way to live as part of promoting what is best in general, but best *ways* for different individuals and groups. Different abilities, disabilities, interests, relationships, cultures, species, and environmental niches are all relevant in contemplating ethical diversity. By contrast, ethical relativists can say that bulldozing everything in the wake of an American empire might be right for Americans who happen to believe along those lines.

(7) *Ethics is only fully intelligible in cultural contexts.* Best caring accepts this dictum, acknowledging the role of custom, language, environment, and other factors. At the same time, along with cultural constructions such as language, there are animal absolutes that we have in common. Suffering, though, is partly cultural, e.g., frustration at a custom being breached such as burping which is valorized in Turkey though not generally in North America. The lack of cultural consensus over ethics is also acknowledged, and again, much diversity is honored. It is also understandable that relativism can *seem* to be true if all one has in one's analysis are competing moral intuitions. On such a framework, right and wrong will only be intelligible relative to specific intuitive standpoints. However, such ethical relativism is not necessarily viable in a post-intuitionist understanding. Ironically, ethical relativists are not strictly committed to respecting cultural contexts with sensitivity in any absolute sense whatsoever.

(8) *Honoring diverse voices.* This accords with respect for cultural preferences and individuality that are parts of best caring, although relativists can offer no guarantees

in this or any other respect. I speak on my own behalf in this paper, but I welcome discourses that have been iterated and ones to come from divergent (inter)personal standpoints. I have already exhibited more attention to diverse voices in normative sociology in Part 1 than I have seen in any other work. Subjective meanings are important as preferred or personal ways of interpreting the world, and deserve to be treated with empathy, respect and open debate. No one's findings are "positionless."

(9) *Respecting the contextual and being suspicious of the "transcendental."* Best caring does not transcend contexts. Desires and feelings are alive in any number of contexts, which makes best caring an ethic of sweeping relevance. But best caring does not claim to be eternal. Not only did it develop historically, but sentient life on Earth will have a limited time-space span before, say, our sun becomes a red giant. Although some things are true of all Earth's sentient creatures, e.g., pain feeling bad, is this "universal"? We do not have knowledge of the whole universe—do sentient beings exist elsewhere? Is best caring "transhistorical"? Again, best caring tries to speak truths pertaining to the history of sentient beings, and is also historically specific in terms of honoring cultural or individual preferences for example.

(10) *Anti-authoritarianism.* It is perhaps arrogant to pose an opinion without justifying it at all. It is generally authoritarian to say what "must" be the case based on someone's say-so, yet that is the tactic of both intuitionists and also ethical relativists. Best caring rejects such authoritarian dogmatism and aims instead for comprehensive justifications.

(11) *Anti-ethnocentrism.* I argue, in what may be a surprising move, that best caring is far less ethnocentric than ethical relativism. First, there is a sense in which ethical relativism furthers ethnocentrism in the world. Ethnocentrics are "buried" and centered in their own cultures. Yet considering moral right and wrong to be whatever one's culture states is a practice that centers right and wrong solidly in various ethnicities. True, respect for other cultures *may* somewhat mitigate this ethnocentric tendency, but unfortunately, such respect is a logically and empirically dispensable part of ethical relativism, since many cultures are in fact intolerant of other cultures and there is no *absolute* favoring of respect for all cultures if one assumes moral relativity. Cultures that are or will become intolerant would be fully supported by

ethical relativism, whereas tolerant cultures are of course not even an issue. The situation therefore could hardly be worse. No single philosophy could *maximize* ethnocentric views more than ethical relativism. After all, generally, the ethnocentric alternative to moral relativity is just a given single cultural view that is ethnocentric. Relativity though favors the most possible ethnocentric views. By contrast, best caring does not reckon moral rightness ethnocentrically, but rather in a cosmopolitan fashion, and is not logically open to cultural tyranny. Second, people do not often hold that their cultural ethics are purely relative: most cultures have believed there is something absolute about cultural ethical belief systems. Peter Jones astutely points out that people in different cultures believe that their ethics are simply true, *universally*, not valid for their respective cultures alone. (Jones, 1994, p. 219) So in light of this common absolutism, it might be ethnocentric rather to impose a model of ethical relativism on different cultures since *most societies* do not actually function in such a manner. They typically embrace values that are part of an absolutist religious fabric, for example, or that fit into systems of laws that reflect absolutist moral tendencies such as universal human rights. So absolutes in ethics are not necessarily “ethnocentric,” although absolutes need to be defended rather than merely taken for granted at the same time. Best caring is highly pluralistic and respectful of other cultures in any case since it respects preferences that are generally non-aggressive (aiming for nonharming and justice). Cultural norms tend to become what is *preferred* by people who live by those norms, and so would tend to be respected much more rigorously by best caring advocates than on a culturally relative framework that dignifies the old jingoistic imperial ethic of British colonialists just as much as, say, a Buddhist ethic that intentionally respects many different cultures. People in a given culture might not like to view their own principles as mere “preferences.” However, in many cases, people operating from a cosmopolitan standpoint will view such cherished principles as preferences, since not everyone will agree on such ideals. Third, let us spell out the logical implications of stating that (a) advocating the best or (b) finding that pain feels bad are “ethnocentric” ideas. Taken literally, this would imply that for an “in-group” such as North Americans, the best is a worthy ideal, but not for the rest of the world. Thus others must logically end up advocating what is *inferior* to the best. That is ethnocentric by being too self-congratulatory and implicitly inferiorizing or condemning other cultures. If one argues that pain feels bad for North Americans, but not for people of other cultures, that is positively racist,

and reminiscent of pro-slavery beliefs that blacks do not feel (as much). We can speak of anti-ethnocentrism in terms of respecting a variety of cultures, however, the fact remains that things feel good or bad for sentient beings—a truth that cuts across *all* cultures. Exaggerating how much truth is rooted in cultures is perhaps in a very different sense “ethnocentric.”

The above shows how best caring strips ethical absolutism of a lot of its objectionable manifestations: ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, claims to the eternal, ahistorical content, etc. Ethical relativism, by contrast, fares not so well.

Best Caring Sociology = Normative Component + Holistic-Descriptive Component

In the above I have defended best caring as a suitable component of that part of sociological theory which is normative. We have pointed to the rational necessity of either positive or negative normative sociology, since otherwise one fails to take a stand on normative absolutes, or else fails to provide sound reasons for one’s stance. However, by far, there is more to sociology than its normative component. Some have said there *is* no normative component, but I suggest that we lay such dogmatism safely to rest: there must be, in positive or negative form. However, given that sociology obviously has a descriptive component, how do we describe society and its component parts, and ongoing social phenomena? How do we describe the evolution of social forms? I hold that a best caring sociology model would take most care to describe all aspects of society by maintaining a holistic focus, as Feagin and Vera impute to liberation sociology in general. (Feagin and Vera, 2001, p. 257) As with the term “liberation sociology,” I came to think of a holistic focus independently as well. However, I provide an elaboration of this idea, unlike these authors’ passing mention of this topic in *Liberation Sociology*.

Traditional sociological theories typically have a biased descriptive focus:

sociological theory	focus	opposite focus
structural-functionalism	interrelating and orderly structures and their corresponding functions	social chaos
symbolic interactionism	social representations in particular contexts of interrelation	factors that are not as socially contingent such as biology or the environment
conflict theory/Marxism	class struggle	cross-societal cooperation, e.g., the international postal system
feminism	patriarchy	females as oppressive alongside males, e.g., females as speciesists in their own right
postmodernism	skepticism, deconstruction	what can be truly justified using reasoning

Best caring sociology strives to be liberated from descriptive bias—as part of *best description*, or being the most descriptive—and requires nothing less than exploring *all* aspects of society with interest, respect, and qualitative data. The table above shows that the opposites of the given descriptive theories may provide interesting foci, as can any of the foci of these and other theories themselves. Best caring sociology, a variant of liberation sociology, is multi-pronged in its descriptive focus, taking care not to exclude anything from vision nor to render aspects of the social world (relatively) invisible. After all, I ask: science in general is not formulated with a descriptive bias, so why should *social* science be any different? What is “insignificant” to one person in society (e.g., stamps or even dirt) is very important to others. I thus include all of the foci of previous descriptively biased theories and then some. The only thing I would add is not a bias: sociology would be remiss if it does

not serve the goals of liberation in the way that it describes the world. That is not to say that all sociology need be *applied*, however, or of a practical bent. Best caring respects desires and preferences, and human curiosity is indeed generally part of a powerful preference-set. The exploration of social issues for curiosity, then, is also significant for best caring sociology, and such pursuits may or may not happen to have practical implications beyond the exploration of the social world itself. Can it be objected that holistic descriptive sociology *lacks* focus? On the contrary, it permits the greatest possible abundance of unblinkered and topical foci.

Objections and Replies

Objection A: Best caring is in violation of “scientific neutrality.”

Reply: It is necessary to distinguish between different types of neutrality:

- (1) Neutrality between hypotheses that are equally (non)evident, or insufficiently evident;
- (2) Neutralizing feelings or desires in relation to some or all sentient beings.

To escape bias, normative sociology must approach all competing hypotheses impartially, or with strict attention to evidence. Consider, for example, the finding that pain feels bad. It is far from *equally* evident that pain feels good or neutral. So best caring is not in violation of the first kind of neutrality which is indeed relevant to science. Best caring begins impartially and ends up on the side with the best evidence.

What about the second mode of neutrality? True, if you neutralize your feelings, or cast them aside as irrelevant, then your cognition of “bad” in relation to pain might seem to disappear. However, science is oriented towards *cognition* of reality as a means of acquiring evidence to test hypotheses. That is why scientists pay such close attention to the five senses when investigating the physical world. Neutralizing one’s feelings, while possible, would not be answering my findings about feeling cognition with *more* cognition, especially the *relevant* form of feeling cognition. Rather, imposing such “neutrality,” which I emphasize does not logically relate to the scientific method unlike neutrality form (1), would simply *get rid of our feeling*

cognition. A neutral view of pain is not scientifically neutral at all but the sense of the pain itself is merely neutralized.

Thus, the second kind of neutrality is a *threat* to scientific investigation rather than an aid. It is like trying to study what a ball looks like by blindfolding oneself. It is an illogical and irrelevant, even intellectually perverse approach to the issue. It hides from the truth and safeguards ignorance. It is a holding-pattern of denial. My claims about feeling cognition must be investigated by verifying if what I claim about our awareness of feelings in general is accurate or not. Am I right to say that pleasure feels good? In science we are not neutral about facts, once they are known, and we are also not neutral about whether to pay attention to the reality that we are supposed to be studying. It would seem that the second kind of neutrality illogically insinuates itself into “scientific” discourse by loose word-association, since the other kind of neutrality is indeed important.

The kind of callousness that sometimes masquerades as scientific neutrality is really something else: *oppressive*. Neutrality is supposed to eliminate bias, but this second kind institutes prejudice and ignorance systematically, thus exhibiting extreme bias. We cannot decide scientific questions by ignoring the evidence. Such practices must be deemed pseudo-scientific. Scientists who advocate the second kind of neutrality are affectively challenged not just personally, but institutionally. A kind person would never fail to consider that pain feels bad and pleasure feels good. I am inclined to conclude that the second kind of neutralism is not an indifferent matter, nor even merely unkind, but makes people *cruel* (if only passively), or personally disposed to conduce towards bad events. Refusing to acknowledge someone’s pain as “really” a bad thing for them is not only false but callous—which is not the best attitude in that it fails to lead to the most good and least bad.

Objection B: This social scientific ethic asserts that we need to guide ourselves with reference to impersonal truths. However, such truths should not cause us to act like puppets.

Reply: I am not arguing that they ought to. Rather, when we seek to choose what is best, impersonal truths are *relevant* to such determinations. Actually, some

sociologists sometimes accept ideologies that make people seem like impersonal puppets. To make social science appear like the hard sciences, social scientists sometimes state that social phenomena can be predicted in principle just like all physical events. Such a belief imposes a highly deterministic theory of human nature. However, liberation sociology holds that we can reasonably *choose* the future, as ethics would have us do, and that we are not puppets of, say, Hegelian or Marxist historicism.

Objection C: Value judgments are contrary to “empirical knowledge,” (Weber, 1962, p. 48) although we can assess the value of means and techniques using empirical studies. (Weber, 1947, pp. 160-161) Herbert Blumer, the founder of symbolic-interactionism, in a related vein of thought, calls a priori theoretical schemes “sets of unverified concepts.” (Blumer, 1969, p. 33)

Reply: Empirical knowledge refers to knowledge based on experience. If we advocated what is “best” but nothing we experienced could reasonably be described as good or bad, our commitment would be hollow. However, Weber is assuming that the only legitimate forms of “experience” are the five senses that are used in response to physical objects: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. *Affective cognition is experienced too.* And we can know not only when we have a headache using such cognition, but also that pain feels bad.

Objection D: Values not only do not rely on what is empirically observable, but also, they do not pertain to what is logically demonstrable. (Weber, 1978, p. 69)

Reply: Can it not be logically demonstrated that nothing could be better than the best, or that something with inferior goodness cannot be best? Weber and Blumer assume logic to be more alien to ethics than it actually is.

Objection E: There is, as philosopher David Hume wrote, a “fact-value distinction.” (Weber, 1978, p. 74; Mills, 1959, p. 77) This point is implicitly echoed by Randall Collins, who wrote *The Sociology of*

***Philosophies*, and concluded from his lengthy survey that we can be assured of several items of reality (or fact) as sociologists: thinking, language, other people, time and space, and material bodies. (Collins, 1998, p. 860) His implication seems to be that, unlike thinking, we cannot be sure of values or feelings for example.**

Reply: That we have feelings and desires is a fact. That pain feels bad is also a fact. So if we find a kind of bad for sentient beings in that kind of feeling, that also seems to occur in the realm of facts. If a firm wedge is driven between values and facts, then moral absolutes may *seem* to be more in the domain of pretence or fiction, or dogmatism, rather than in the realm of what we in fact find to be of positive or negative value as sentient beings, sensing the world in relation to our own and others' feelings and desires. However, such a wedge should be rejected in light of the affective as well as the effective being quite factual.

Objection F: Emotions are an “irrational factor.” (Weber, 1962, p. 32)

Reply: If emotions (or more broadly, feelings) are a kind of overlooked fact, they can serve in our reasoning by assisting evaluative inferences in particular. *Emotions* such as anger can cause people to be biased against individuals, but so can *ideas* such as racist stereotypes. There is nothing inherent to all emotions that is anti-rational any more than the same is true of ideas. Sometimes feelings and ideas disrupt logical flow, other times not, and still other times they play indispensable roles in reasoning.

Objection G: There is “no scientific procedure” to decide ethical cases. (Weber, 1978, p. 85)

Reply: The same scientific method of accepting hypotheses supported by evidence, and rejecting hypotheses that are not supported by evidence (e.g., intuitions) may indeed be morally useful.

Objection H: Ethics is based on religion. (Weber, 1958, p. 27)

Reply: None of the support for best caring's hypotheses are spiritual either in nature or presupposition.

**Objection I: Ethics is a profession of faith or involves "professorial prophesy."
(Weber, 1978, p. 72) Philosophers who engage in scientism suggest that
science is a false and pretentious Messiah. (Mills, 1959, p. 16)**

Reply: I do not merely have *faith* that pain feels bad, but *know* it to be the case. That is the case with other beliefs I argue for without putting stock in intuitions. Positive normative sociologists claim no special status for themselves, urging that others should believe them because they enjoy some kind of miraculous "knowing" status, but rather, best caring social scientists simply point to the evidence and invite anyone to replicate their findings.

Objection J: Value-judgments create a "cult of personality." (Weber, 1978, p. 73)

Reply: This assumes that value-judgments are merely offered by charismatic individuals. Sometimes that is the case as Weber has observed. However, best caring's reasoning is not based on such factors.

Objection K: Even $2 + 2 = 4$ is historically contextualized. (Mannheim, 1966, p. 72)

Reply: So too are all of my claims made in the English language. But such a fact does not show that four units is ever, in effect, of another number than itself any more than it shows that pain *in itself* ever feels good, no matter one's native linguistic community.

**Objection L: In ethics there are "...no rational justifications which the intellect
could confront and engage in debate." (Mills, 1956, p. 356)**

Reply: Best caring provides many such arguments.

Objection M: Herbert Blumer, who coined the term “symbolic interactionism” and was inspired by G. H. Mead, wrote that the meaning of things is derived from or arises out of social interaction with one’s fellows. (Blumer, 1969, p. 2)

Reply: Best caring has emerged in the context of a society. However, apart from *any* socializing, the Earth goes around the sun and pain feels bad.

Thorstein Veblen assumes that science “knows nothing of...better or worse.” (Veblen 1919, p. 19) Merely dogmatically, Veblen reflects Weber’s mode of thought as do many other social scientists. Karl Mannheim, in *Ideology and Utopia* (1966), allies relativism and skepticism with objectivity itself but without very much in the way of supporting arguments. Surprisingly or not, the reasoning of the negative normative sociologists *fails*. At least, that is the current state of the debate after considering relevant “evidence” for counter-hypotheses.

Conclusion

I believe that best caring sociology, developed in a scientific manner, may be more sociological, in a sense, than many forms of conventional sociology at the present time. That is, best caring applies the method of rigorously justifying hypotheses more than the conventional view which excludes positive normative sociology intuitively in the end, even while implicitly relying on dubious justifications of what I term “negative normative sociology.” That is because, as it seems, best caring is a system of hypotheses that most squares with the available evidence unlike the old intuitionist arguments. Negative normative sociologists have been revealed as employing *bad arguments*, most of which are merely dismissive rhetorical gestures. Critical theory and liberation sociology as articulated by Feagin and Vera rarely refer to animals, even though animals are not only among the oppressed, but their very oppression has seemingly distorted our sense of values that are real for all sentient beings.

Science is not a finite achievement, but an exercise in aspiration. It is an ever-expanding endeavor. I predict a growing consensus in favor of the findings of feeling

and desiring cognition, and the logical defense and implications of the best caring principle. Calling an ethic “scientific” would sound pretentious at first, perhaps because of cultural conditioning, and the previous failure to establish a scientific ethical system. Even experienced normative theorists, familiar with the intuitionism that dominates philosophical ethics, would think calling intuitionism “scientific” all too much. However, ethics is not limited to intuitionism as I have shown, and should best, in keeping with science, maintain an *anti-intuitionist* stance.

The death of the Enlightenment has been greatly exaggerated, but it has *seemed* dead especially in the stalemate over ethical intuitions. Let us say that Enlightenment ethics has had a near-death experience. But it is not dead, together with its ideal of being skeptical towards the dubious, such as intuitionism, and the promise of an ability to reason about important social and other matters including ethics and rights. Our sociology of particular societies can be overlaid with a *sociology of civilization* which normative sociology affords. Civilization is a family of ideal forms of society, although as noted above, we have great cause to avoid ethnocentrism, cultural imperialism, and insisting on a culturally monolithic view. Recovering our natural “animal knowledge” is absolutely critical to our becoming civilized, ironically enough.

Best caring has another advantage besides independent justification, its ability to answer objections, and its incorporating the advantages but not the disadvantages of competing moral theories (for a substantiation of the last point, see Sztybel, 2006b, pp. 21-22). Best caring, from a theoretical evolutionary perspective of humans as animals, has a great capacity for adapting in response to constructive criticism. Since it advocates what is best in general, any suggested improvement can readily be incorporated, just as the body of science in general grows with new results in knowledge-seeking. In other words, best caring has the advantage of being progressive not only compared to the intuitionist dogmas that have gone before, but also potentially in relation to itself.

The goal of establishing liberation sociology is not merely “academic.” The environment is going to hell, the gap between rich and poor is perilously widening, animals are being swallowed in a virtual “Holocaust,” (Sztybel, 2006a) many Indigenous cultures are disappearing, and millions of women and people with darker

skin—among many others—are being stubbornly held back from fulfilling their potentials. The urgency of these concerns makes liberation sociology also of crucial relevance in its goals and questions. Morality is what is overridingly determining of society according to Durkheim. (Durkheim, 1958, p. 247) Unfortunately, ethics often does *not* carry the day, and it is rather domineering profiteers, for example, who get away with significant injustices. It would perhaps be fine for ethics to win out, but we need liberation studies to help make that happen. Without commitment—i.e., to liberation—there can be no efficient realization of goals, but only a vain hazarding of potential. We need to *decide* to let ethics determine more of social life, including social science.

One of the greatest ironies in history is that all forms of oppressors claim to be “superior.” Consider, sociologically speaking, the following facts, in terms of injustice, abuse, harm and even violence. If there is a socioeconomic class that has behaved the worst, it is the capitalist or managerial class. If there is a sex responsible for about 95% of violent crime (as is common knowledge), it is the male sex. If there is a group with a sexual preference that has members who beat and kill others it is predominantly the heterosexuals. If there are people of a skin colour who have promoted iniquity and hatred it is mostly the so-called “whites.” If there is a level of ability in actions that have blocked the potential of others less fortunate that would for the most part be without disability. It is the dominant faiths that have slain and conquered the most. If there is a species that has visited Holocaust-like conditions on other creatures it is solely humanity. This is not to say, by any means, that all members of these groups noted are oppressive. In any case, the sociological explanation for this overwhelming irony is simple. Alleged superiority was historically used as a justification for *harming, dominating and exploiting without conscience*. So it is no wonder, then, that the allegedly “superior” groups have the worst track records.

Liberation sociology is partly liberation from old and prejudiced ways of doing sociology. Even if one is a more traditional sociologist who tries to totally exclude ethics altogether from social science, this paper shows that such a person should be either doing or subscribing to *negative* normative sociology—and has a lot to answer for. Such theorists need to address sociological advocacy of norms too. Others may

find in liberation sociology the tools they need to affirm liberation in a way that is principled and perhaps even scientific. We need a new kind of globalism to compete with the ills of global corporate capitalism. Not “taking over” the world, but simply *liberating the Earth’s residents in terms of what they care about the most*. This counter-globalism would stave off harm, inequity and honor individual and collective preferences. By transcending deadlocks of intuitions we have an intellectual hope for world peace, since otherwise intuitionists only have force of charms or force of arms to settle their differences. I hope that I have articulated a vision of liberation for social science of which my murdered relatives could be proud, but to the extent that my account is wanting, I am eager for improvements.

Meanwhile, looking back on both parts of this study of animals and normative sociology, there is much evidence that best caring presents significant improvements over past offerings in relevant sociological theory, including but not only:

- (1) Using the scientific method to justify positive normative sociology, including with a parsimonious focus on the primary normative principle of best caring;
- (2) Widening the scope of experience in empirical knowledge to include feeling cognition and desiring cognition;
- (3) Offering a form of liberation sociology that does not depend on ethical relativism, with its reduction to subjectivism and equal privileging of, for example, oppression and liberation;
- (4) Going beyond unscientific and logically failed intuitionism of both positive and negative normative sociologists hitherto;
- (5) Logically entailing the ideals of previous positive normative sociology (e.g., sympathy, justice, rights, etc.) without simply *assuming* what is considered to be desirable;
- (6) Answering chief arguments of negative normative sociology including but not

only the allegedly “nonempirical” nature of ethics and the is-ought or fact-value gaps;

- (7) Providing a holistic “most descriptive” (or best description) focus unlike descriptively biased sociological theories;
- (8) Exemplifying sociological values better than ethical relativism in areas such as anti-ethnocentrism, privileging of scientific knowledge, attention to context, etc.;
- (9) Improving upon the identifier, “critical theory,” which is both too negative and also vague, and also on other global labels such as “ecofeminist”;
- (10) Showing how all sociologists need to have a positive or negative normative account, either originally articulated or at least subscribed to;
- (11) Offering a version of ethical absolutism that is stripped of disadvantages of other absolutist accounts: e.g., overabstract, speculative, faith-based, etc.;
- (12) Helping to protect animals, who are especially vulnerable not only to human oppression but also the perils of ethical relativism;
- (13) Not treating animals either wholly or by degrees as absent referents; and
- (14) Defending animal liberation in a way that may defeat utilitarian vivisection and superiorism, for example, thus adding to John Sorenson’s normative sociology account (see Part 1).

There are also many particular objections to specific normative sociologies considered in Parts 1 and 2 that are inapplicable to best caring sociology. The more that normative sociology becomes rationally articulated, the more progress can be made in this vital field of inquiry.

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