

Article

On the Subjective Value of Life

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Abstract: Claims (or the implicit assumption of the inherent worth of life) are pervasive and remain virtually unchallenged. I have already argued that these outright moral dictates are thinly veiled vestiges of theological ethics which, following the removal of their theological foundations, remain little more than nebulous claims supported only by fear of the consequences of a challenge. In my previous work, I rejected an *a priori* claim of an objective life's worth, which is the worth that we should assign to *others'* lives, and elucidated a principled framework that gives rise to the said worth immediately, as a consequence of the experiences of its sentient environment. Herein, I address the complementary question of the value of one's own life, which is the *subjective value of life* and, thus, Camus's (in)famous view that "there is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide". As before, I rejected the inherency of a life's worth, showing it to be *contradictio in adjecto*, and instead show how this worth too can in large part be seen to emerge from sentient experiences of the subject. Many of these are innately linked to experiences of other sentient beings as objects, thus erecting a framework that is both principled and thoroughly humane with Schopenhauer's 'loving kindness' running through it. Practically, my framework illuminates an understanding of suicide as a real-world phenomenon, helping those who remain living to understand a deceased one's decision, and paving the way to answering questions, such as when there should be an attempt to prevent suicide, and what means of suicide prevention are ethically permissible.

Keywords: suicide; Camus; Thales; prediction; experience



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1. Introduction

In my previous work, I addressed the problem of the basis of the *objective* value of life, i.e., the ethical basis that gives emergence to the value that we should place on other beings' lives. With the present article, I aim to extend this foundation and complete the proposed framework by answering what (if anything) it is that gives one's own life its value, to wit, the *subjective* value of life. It is important to highlight right at the outset a fundamental difference between the two challenges. The former, i.e., the question for the determination of the objective value of life, inherently has an ethical dimension for it by its very nature concerns the manner in which we treat others. In contrast, the question before us now does not. However, as I shall demonstrate herein, unavoidable ethical problems do emerge in the consideration thereof empirically, i.e., by considering human minds as they are rather than as *in abstracto*.

To start with, to make our road ahead clear of remnant misconceptions and distractions, I would like to immediately dispel any ill-founded ideas of an absolute, inherent value of life [1]. The claim of an absolute value of life, or indeed anything at all, is nonsensical, a *contradictio in adjecto*, for the very meaning of the word "value" is comparative in nature. That something has value inherently implies a hypothesized fair *exchange*. When it is talked about the worth of a house, it is understood that the worth is hypostatized by the mutual willingness of its owner and its potential owner to make an exchange of the house and a certain sum of (usually) money. That 'a bird in the hand is *worth* two in the bush' means that my exchanging a bird I have in the hand for two that are in the bush leaves me no better or worse off. *Example multiplicanda*. Similarly, any meaningful conception of the

value of life should, at least in principle, be able to answer the following questions. Is the value of every human life the same [2]? Is this value temporally immutable or can it change? If it cannot change, how can practical decisions in, for example, health care on the priority of treatment be decided upon [3]? Does only human life have value? If so, why? If not, then what is the value of the life of a member of a different species [4], and can a human life be weighed against an equivalent cumulative (however, this accumulation of value may be done) value of the life of, say, a pig? Should I continue living or kill myself, and *why* [5]?

Even more absurd and mystical is talk of an infinite value of life: an extreme case of absolute worth [6]. If the value of life indeed were infinite, then there would be no moral basis for choosing between saving a single human life and, *ceteris paribus*, a hundred. If the value of life indeed were infinite, then Fichte's bizarre views that defending a victim of persecution with danger to one's own life is an absolute obligation and that as soon as human life is in danger one no longer has the right to think of the safety of their own [7], would be justified; yet, how can these supposed moral imperatives be meaningful when there has not ever been a single individual who acts in this way? Even if these colossal objections were to be ignored for a moment, difficult as it is to ignore such abject absurdity, where could we trace the origins of this infinite value if we set theology aside? It certainly cannot be found within our inner selves for the moral duty that it demands is in stark contrast to the reality and the history of humankind which is rife with opportunistic murder and genocide, but also extreme altruism and self-sacrifice which too are at odds with the idea of the infinite worth of life. The origins cannot be outwith us either, for how can any material-sensible apprehension possibly affect an infinite valuation of anything? Indeed, even going as far to allow theological morality to weigh in would offer no saving grace here, for the practical inadmissibility of moral apprehension of an infinite worth would still rest on us, our finiteness and the (in this context) feeble structure of our minds, rather than on any omnipotent and omniscient deity.

In short, any notion of an absolute value of life must be rejected and the value of life, subjective and objective, must be sought in the tangible, sensible, and material. Having addressed the foundations of the objective worth of life in my previous work [3], I now turn my attention to the flip side of the coin, to wit, its subjective value.

2. To Live or Not to Live

Thales of Miletus rejected there being a difference between life and death. In an anecdote, most likely apocryphal, recorded by Diogenes Laertius [8], when Thales' view was challenged by being asked why then he does not die, Thales responded that there is no difference.

Was Thales right? Why, or why not? Camus [9] considered this to be the foremost question in philosophy:

“There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest—whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories—comes afterwards. These are games; one must first answer. Moreover, if it is true, as Nietzsche claims, a philosopher, to deserve our respect, must preach by example, you can appreciate the importance of that reply, for it will precede the definitive act. These are facts the heart can feel; yet they call for careful study before they become clear to the intellect.”

In the same work, Camus rejected suicide, for himself at least, dying in a car accident 18 years after its publication, at the age of 46.

I shall come back to Camus shortly. For now, it suffices to say that after many years of agreeing with him on what the most important question of philosophy is, herein I recant, and by addressing the philosophy of suicide, come back full circle to Thales as regards to what I would propose as the actual fundamental philosophical challenge.

Writing in 1840, Schopenhauer [10] noted:

“I observe straight away that there are two questions: one concerns the principle, the other the foundation of ethics, two quite distinct things, although they are mostly conflated. . .”

Very much the same could be said today, nearly two centuries later. Hence, I begin my thesis with a clear exposition of the foundations upon which it is built, and a justification of the said foundations so that they can be properly understood, interrogated, and challenged if the reader finds the need to do so.

I argue that our basis for ethics and, thus, for answering the question before us, should be erected on the basis of the sentience of beings; that is their ability to experience pleasure on the one hand, and suffering and pain on the other. Though implicitly so, it should be clear that this is equivalent to saying on the basis of the *structural* similarity of our mechanisms of apprehending and experiencing the world, be that structure biological, in silico, or of any other nature. It is by means of this shared structure that coherent ethics can emerge, neither as a subjective nor an objective, but rather as inter-subjective, a socially agreed upon set of norms and values. Clearly, this consensus has to be done by beings which are *both* sentient *and* sufficiently cognitively sophisticated; yet, the aforementioned norms and values are projected objectively to everything sentient (thus, we do not have ethical *expectations* from dogs, say, but we do *afford their sentient experiences* regard and sympathy [3]).

With this in mind, it would seem that the quest for the origin of the subjective value of life should be simpler than that for the origin of the objective value of life. After all, one’s own sentience is something that is directly, immediately known by a sentient being; it is felt. In contrast, the sentience of others is not directly knowable; rather, we apprehend it by virtue of indirect, mediate means. Yet, true as this may be, the structures of the two problems differ and give rise to different challenges, as I shall elucidate shortly.

2.1. Potemkin’s Foundations: Apropos of Vacuous or Fallacious Aetiologies of a Life’s Worth

At first sight, it is tempting to declare that suicide becomes a sound choice when one’s life ceases to be worth living, which is a phrasing not seldom encountered in the literature [11–13]. Yet, this succinct and seemingly simple proposition is underlain by latent conceptual flaws which make it at best of no practical use, and more likely, sophistic and vacuous. As it so often ends up being the case in debates of philosophically nuanced matters, the culprit behind the aforementioned flaws is to be found in language, which is the insufficiently careful use thereof [3]. It is always worth remembering that unlike mathematics, say, wherefore a custom-tailored system of expressing admissible statements has been developed, philosophical discourse is conducted using natural language, which has largely evolved for the exchange of mundane, everyday information; this both limits philosophical thought and makes the task of communicating relevant ideas difficult and danger-ridden, requiring great care and an appreciation of possible inherent limitations imposed thereby [14].

Firstly, consider the use of the word ‘life’ as used in ‘when one’s live ceases to be worth living’. Life is not a *thing*, something static, but a *process* and as such something that the experience and the observation of inherently materialize across time; as a process, it is also something that is in constant flux, something that is perpetually undergoing changes. Therefore, the understanding of ‘life’ in this context refers to an infinity of possible experiences of life, all of which *start* in the present and extend into the future. In other words, inherent in the proposition is the notion of *prediction* [15], which is a cognitive task. Understanding the various and only all too easily overlooked aspects which underlie it is paramount for appreciating the philosophical challenges involved as well as ethical consequences that emerge from it. I shall return to this shortly.

Going back to Thales, already on the basis of the observations made *ut supra*, we can readily reject Thales’ claim that there is no fundamental difference between life and death, for the former is experienced, leading to feelings of pleasure and suffering, whereas the

latter is a mere void, absent of any feeling whatsoever for it is absent of a possible subject of these feelings [3]. Epicurus has the latter correct [16]:

“Death is nothing to us; for that which is dissolved, is without sensation, and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us.”

That being said, unlike Hippocrates [17], Epicurus did not reject one’s right to suicide on the basis of individual autonomy (a view that I will consider in more detail shortly), he did consider suicide unreasonable [18]; at the same time, he offered little in terms of a principled argument to support his view. The framework that I introduce in the present article elucidates the scope of justified cognitive challenges of a *specific* suicide (or, preferably, potential suicide), steering away from those that transgress from principled foundations, and casts light on the morality of the (again, *specific*) act itself.

Returning to our interrogation of the word ‘life’, not unlike Kant’s (in?)famous categorical imperative [19] (or indeed, the basis of Fichte’s ethics [20]), the proposition that ‘that suicide becomes a sound choice when one’s life ceases to be worth living’ turns back on itself in the locus of any substance for it gives no guidance whatsoever as to what determines this worth, how this worth is to be discovered, etc. I trust that the reader will agree with me that the *punctum saliens* here cannot be outwith the human minds, for this would require either a theological metaphysics or a mystical foundation of another sort, a specious nebula. What would be equally unproductive would be to seek it *purely* subjectively, which would lead to a thesis, which prohibits any practical application, void of a common understanding, impotent of either explaining our real-world observations or illuminating individuals as to the best way of acting. Indeed, for all the evocative and beautiful language, this is all that Camus [9] offers:

“I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death—and I refuse suicide...”,

that is, very little more than shallow, uplifting verbiage, not unlike that of Epicurus in its (lack of) substance. Indeed, this trend is observed widely: from the Pythagoreans, Plato, Hippocrates, and Epicurus, to Hobbes, Kant, Schopenhauer, Dostoevsky, and Camus, and many notable philosophers have expressed distinct discomfort with the idea of suicide, but rather unsatisfyingly, failed to offer much more than an *argumentum ad passiones* in defense of their views (though, ironically, Pythagoras himself may have died by suicide [21]).

Neither an objective nor a wholly unintelligible objectively subjective view of the understanding of the subjective value of life is satisfactory, the former being shrouded in mysticism and lacking in compassion, and the latter permitting a summary dismissal of suicide as *prima facie* ‘pathological’ [22], a *petitio principii* masked by falsely authoritative technical jargon. Rather than follow suit, we must choose the road informed by the empirical, one which recognizes the common and the divergent in the human minds, minds which are affected by an existing, material substance, leading to an inter-subjective explication of what appears as the subjective value of life.

2.2. A Sentientist Hypostatization of the Subjective Value of Life

Having hitherto expressed a series of critiques regarding the prior thoughts about the subjective value of life, and explained and rejected various philosophical loci wherein the origin of the said value could be sought, I have in a manner nearly reached my definition in a negative sense. Explicating my thesis in a positive sense is now a reasonably straightforward task. I shall approach it in a methodical, step-by-step manner, so as to maintain clarity of exposition.

Firstly, the decision on whether to continue living or to commit suicide is predicated on one’s *prediction* of possible future lives. This prediction includes lives, which end up in the person’s suicide, for the decision on whether to kill oneself has to precede the acting on this decision. Secondly, the decision is further informed by one’s weighing of the thus

predicted experiences of pleasure and suffering. These two high-level propositions can be further concretized and decomposed into constituent elements with narrower scopes.

From what has been said, we can recognize the contingency of the life-or-death decision on the following: (α) an (implicit) judgment of probabilities attached to the objective, which is a cognitive process albeit one affected by the subjective (e.g., emotions) [23], (β) the subjectively hypostatized worth of both positive and negative hypothetical life experiences, and (γ) the synthesis from these hypothetical life experiences of a judgment of that life's overall worth. The first of these challenges, α , falls securely within the realm of scientific inquiry and is a topic that has been studied extensively [23–26], so I trust that the reader will find it a relief to hear that I find little point in bringing owls to Athens and elaborating on it further here, though I shall return to one aspect of it shortly. Rather, I would turn the attention to the second point, β , a thoughtful examination whereof leads to a crucial realization linking the subjective value of life to the objective one [3], further to its molding by a variety of sociocultural factors (including spiritual or religious ones) which play a role in shaping one's attitudes towards suicide. In particular, humans are highly social creatures, and save for the rarest of exceptions, major contributors to experiences in life concern relationships with others (n.b. these others need not necessarily be humans but could involve any sentient being whatsoever, such as dogs, cats, or other animals [27], or, in principle, artificial or alien sentience) [28–31]. Therefore, any hypothetical future life should take into account the experiences of the sentient beings that we feel sympathy for too since our sympathetic apprehension of their experiences becomes part of our own subjective life experience. In his essay on the foundation of morals, Schopenhauer nearly realizes this, yet fails to make sense of the whole, ending up paradoxically requiring that any truly moral action has no benefit to oneself but only to others, while at the same time seeking to secure the basis of morals in sympathy [10]. How can a righteous act of helping another not bring one pleasure if the act is truly driven by genuine sympathy? Thus Schopenhauer ends up falling into the same trap that he quite rightly criticized Kant for. In contrast, to concretize my point, consider a hypothetical future life that ends with one's own suicide. A major source of suffering that can be expected in that life stems from the person's compassion for others and the impact that the suicide would have on them. Indeed, this is a fact well supported by empirical evidence [32,33]. "How much will my loved ones suffer?" one cannot help but ask him/herself [34,35]. This suffering, stemming from $\alpha\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$, that is love and sympathy for others is extremely intense, so much so that it can outweigh one's purely self-centered pains [36,37]. Equally, feelings of affection towards others can drive one *towards* suicide for the same reason; this is because others' suffering can become our own suffering too, by the very nature of the phenomenon that sympathy describes [33]. Thus founded, neither decision can be considered selfish or morally objectionable. Herein emerges a potential challenge to my thesis: in some cases, an individual may also choose to reject suicide on the basis of their concern for others, thereby committing what some may describe as an act of self-sacrifice, seemingly accepting a life of pain out of compassion and love. However, a contradiction here is illusory. The said illusion is a result of the failure to recognize that the generosity and kindness that we extend to others affects different levels of pleasure in each of us. The example given merely describes an individual for whom this pleasure (noting that throughout the present article I use this word in the neo-Epicurean rather than colloquial sense), which raises their life's worth, and outweighs the suffering, which has the opposite direction of pull. As I noted already, Schopenhauer failed to appreciate this [10]:

"This process is, I repeat, mysterious: for it is something of which reason can give no immediate account and whose grounds are not to be ascertained on the path of experience."

I suspect that his failure at forming a cohesive view of the whole here is in part explained by the observation that he had no benefit from being exposed to Darwin's ideas, which removes all mystery and explains how this subjective differentiation, including its extreme examples, can emerge from simple, mechanistic processes of nature.

With respect to my third point *ut supra*, γ , all of the specific monodic weals and woes of a life have to be synthesized into one whole: the worth of the entire life's experience. How can this be done? Sitting in the present as we always are, it is tempting to place all these experiences on the same footing and treat them as temporally interchangeable, or, to express it intentionally in the cold, mechanistic language of mathematics, to average them in one swift move of a proverbial abacus. Yet, this would be a foolhardy thing to do, lacking in principle and a solid philosophical foundation. There can be no firmer first principle here, no higher authority, than that obtained by empirical means, which does not speak of minds *in abstracto*, but of minds *as they are*. Such evidence can be seen to speak loudly in favor of Kierkegaard's absurd, with individuals in some circumstances seemingly preferring an experience with *objectively* more suffering [38]. What is consistently observed is that neither the totality of the suffering experienced at each moment, nor the peak suffering, is the sole determinant of one's *post hoc* valuation of life [39]; rather, the most recent, ending experience weighs in heavily [39,40]. An observant reader will have noticed my qualification by the adverb 'seemingly' (the qualification is indeed mine; the original authors make none). Why seemingly? The answer lies in what I already mentioned obliquely, to wit, the authors' implicit treatment of sensible experience as something that can be just weighed up and averaged. That this is not how the human work cannot be meaningfully described as objectively irrational. What is also overlooked here is what I have also emphasized with some care, and that is that these judgments were made *post hoc*, which is in stark contrast to what a person contemplating suicide is faced with: an *ex ante* task. Therein lies one of the fundamental challenges of the problem before us. On the one hand, any *post hoc* valuation of one's life is made on the basis of one's memories of past experiences as they are at present, some altered and some forgotten; on the other, one has to actually live through all those experiences and feel them in what was once the present. There can be no prescription as to how this should be done, nor 'ought' erected on a cognitive or an ethical basis; the best one can do is understand the empirical, the 'is', which is how humans behave.

2.3. The Challenge of Knowing Oneself

Having discussed each of the challenges underpinning the choice between life and death, a challenge that we all face constantly whether we be consciously aware of it or not, I ask the reader to stand back and examine them all with a proverbial artist's squint and ask what they all have in common with one another. The answer lies in the importance of *knowing oneself*, which is the challenge wherewith I would reject and supplant Camus's view of what the foremost question of philosophy is. With reference to the three considerations I outlined previously, and starting with the first, knowing oneself is crucial in the prediction of possible future lives, which is future life experiences. While external constraints may limit our freedom to a greater or a lesser extent, we all nevertheless retain *some* control of our destiny and future so long as we remain conscious (even if we were bound and chained, we would still have the freedom of thought); hence, understanding how we would act in hypothetical scenarios upon which a specific future life is contingent is part and parcel of the said prediction. No less does the knowledge of oneself feature in the subjective hypostatization of the worth of positive and negative experiences in a hypothetical life. In addition to the difficult task of imagining what a certain experience will *feel like*, this hypostatization is also pseudo-subjective, so to speak, in that it involves the self as the subject but not as the 'self' as it *is* now, but as the 'self' as it *will be* in a hypothesized future.

Thus, we can see that questions concerning one's knowledge of him/herself are antecedents to that of suicide, the latter being contingent on the former and, hence, must be considered as more fundamental. As Plato's Socrates in Phaedrus [41] notes:

"But I have no leisure for them at all; and the reason, my friend, is this: I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know myself; so it seems to me ridiculous, when I do not yet know that, to investigate irrelevant things."

Importantly, the notion of ‘self’, unlike that of ‘life’ considered previously, does not inherently extend across the temporal dimension, even if by its nature its apprehension does; there can be no apprehension of ‘I’ as I *am* in the present, for ‘I’ am in constant flow, permanently undergoing changes, any apprehension thereof (and I apprehend myself both as a subject and as an object) always being of an ‘I’ that no longer is. The importance of the temporal in connection with the ‘self’ in the context of the consideration of suicide emerges as a consequence of the self’s representational capabilities which place it in a constant state transformation, whether by factors outwith the self or within it; that is, through self-consciousness. Therefore, in considering a possible future life, one is confronted with the challenge of imagining what their future self will be and, moreover, of contemplating what this future self *could be*, for the change that our self undergoes can be affected, both by direct and indirect means, by our will. In doing so, one has to delineate possible from the impossible, confounded by the appeal of the desirable, and weigh the odds. Goethe wrote:

“If I accept you as you are, I will make you worse; however if I treat you as though you are what you are capable of becoming, I help you become that.”

Much the same can be said of one’s treatment of oneself. Schopenhauer notably failed to appreciate this, out of character treating the self as being virtually mystically unchanging [10].

Even if changes to self are put aside, for example by bounding the time separation of the prediction, empirical evidence shows that human understanding of sentient responses is rather poor. Not only are our affective forecasts often exaggerated, but what is more, the forecasting accuracy is not improved with experience [42]. This inability of understanding oneself through mere self-reflection and experience, which contrasts the expectations of ancient philosophers who set up the discursive framework that stood unchallenged for over two millennia, remained unappreciated until Freud shifted the Overton window to give a clear view of this until then seemingly bizarre realization [43].

2.4. Duty-Based Objections to Suicide

Having identified the fountainheads of the subjective life’s worth, we are now in a strong position to revisit the arguments that object to suicide on a moral basis, i.e., arguments premised on the failure of duty to others and the harm that it inflicts on them, be it others’ specific loved ones or the wider society [44,45].

Schopenhauer [10] and many others who could, in this respect, be described as libertarian, rejected these on the grounds of individual autonomy (Schopenhauer’s objection to suicide was rooted in the considerations of its rationality, which I addressed previously). While I am partially sympathetic to this view, I do not find it wholly convincing. Consider as an example a scenario in which I acquire a painting by, say, Monet and then decide to burn it (lest this example feel contrived, I would direct the reader to the actual case of Ai Weiwei’s exhibitionist destruction of a Han dynasty urn [46]). In many jurisdictions I would have the right to do so (notably, in the USA Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990, 17 USC Section 106A, limits this right somewhat) but I would nevertheless argue that to exercise this *legal* right would be *morally* impermissible for it would cause *undue* harm to others. Arguing for one’s right to suicide on this basis conceptualizes the problem in contractual terms void of compassion and sympathy, the very tenets that quite rightly Schopenhauer himself goes to great lengths to proselytize. From this, some have concluded that suicide in *some cases can be* morally justified [44]. Yet, I would go further. With a view on the deconstruction I presented in the previous section, we have seen that an individual commits suicide when they reach the conclusion that the pleasure in their possible future lives is outweighed by the suffering. Furthermore, *ex hypothesi* those who would be harmed by the person’s suicide care about this person. Thus, greater harm for them, *as judged by our hypothetical suicidal subject*, would ensue were this person to continue living a life of misery, than if this suffering was prevented, albeit by the person’s death. Herein, I emphasized ‘as judged by our hypothetical suicidal subject’ so as to make it clear that this judgment does not have objective validity and that I would certainly not take it to be correct at face value;

however, this cannot affect our view of the morality of the decision for it is the *intention* that matters here. As Schopenhauer [47] put it:

“They tell us that suicide is the greatest piece of cowardice; that only a madman could be guilty of it, and other insipidities of the same kind; or else they make the nonsensical remark that suicide is wrong, when it is quite obvious that there is nothing in the world to which every man has a more unassailable title than to his own life and person.”

Others, such as Kant, reject the morality of suicide on the basis of the claimed failure in the duty to oneself [48]. For the sake of argument I shall accept for a moment the notion of a ‘duty to oneself’ though I find it unconvincing (where is the origin of this supposed imperative to be found, I ask?) [10], and ask what higher duty can one have to oneself but to pursue a happy life and reject suffering when the pursuit of happiness becomes untenable. In the words of Seneca, a sage “lives as long as he ought, not as long as he can” [49].

For the sake of appreciation of the intricacy of the cognitive-emotional milieu, it is insightful to observe the *qualitative* difference in the manner of different pleasures (as understood in the present article and the related scholastic literature) or indeed pains are felt. Some pleasures are felt *immediately* and directly, for example, the pleasure of feeling a loved one’s touch. Others are felt *immediately*, following a process of apprehension, such as the pleasure elicited by the sympathy felt in response to the expressions of joy and relief on the faces of the parents of a child saved from drowning. Yet others are even more distal in origin in that they require a more sophisticated mediation of cognition, for example, the pleasure felt in the making of a product purchase choice as a consumer, which only by a complex chain of reasoning can be inferred to affect a morally agreeable outcome. Immediately felt pleasures can be in a sense considered “urphenomena”, irreducible in the context of ethics. Mediated pleasures, on the other hand, require different proportions of cognitive and imaginative powers. The former of these are instrumental in our derivation of moral rules and the latter are crucial in the anticipation of the future, with, hypothetically, both deriving their pleasurable nature from their likening with the immediate. The actual experiences of the different kinds of pleasure are qualitatively different; yet, they all contribute—as previously elucidated, in a subjectively hypostatized manner—to the weighing up of a life’s weals and woes. Thus, and with a particular reference to the aforementioned objection to suicide on the grounds of harm inflicted upon one’s loved ones, it is entirely possible for one to choose a life abundant in immediately felt suffering, which suffering is offset by the pleasures with a more mediate etiology (or vice versa, to reject a life richer in immediate pleasures which are overcome by immediately felt suffering).

Finally, I would like to note the sole case in which I would consider suicide to be morally wrong and which I have intentionally avoided thus far, and that is suicide *out of malice*. Hitherto I have implicitly assumed that our hypothetical suicidal person is not motivated by the outright immoral, the intention of hurting others unjustly; that is that the person does not derive pleasure from others’ undue suffering. While all my arguments from the preceding section stand as they are in this instance too, for the person’s subjective value of their own life is hypostatized in exactly the same way as before, the moral judgments of the suicidal act (a judgment cast by others) must be different: condemnatory, in contrast to before. Indeed, for the reasons I explained, I consider this to be the only scenario in which suicide should be deemed to be morally wrong. Examples would include the following: a person who wishes to harm somebody that loves them (this being a pathological case of love, as one directed towards somebody who is not morally worthy of it), or somebody imprisoned for murder whose just suffering is expected and is relief given to the victims (I note my understanding of the objections to this example, the consideration whereof is outside the scope of the present discussion) [50–52].

3. Summary and Conclusions

Many a moral argument has been erected on the inveterate premise of the worth of life, usually human life, but also animal and non-animal life. Yet, attempts at securing the foundations of this premise, to wit, what this worth is *in concreto* or indeed where its fountainhead is to be found, are woefully lacking. In my previous work, I laid out a principled framework explaining the origins of the *objective* worth of life; that is the value that we, as moral agents, should place on the lives of other sentient beings (which need not be moral agents themselves). The focus of the present article was on the question of the *subjective* worth of life; that is, the value that each of us assigns to our own life. As before, I rejected any inherent worth of life and explained why such a proposition is meaningless, being nothing more than *contradictio in adjecto*. Unlike previous sentientist arguments that abound in specious haziness, when it comes to specificity and detail, my thesis starts by identifying a number of key elements that are instrumental in raising this claimed worth of life to reality, namely the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the ‘self’, the importance of the treacherous cognitive task of prediction in the valuation, the seemingly absurd manner in which humans integrate past or hypothetical future life experiences, and the overarching significance of the philosophical challenge of knowing oneself. Thus, I argued that the famous dictum of the Oracle of Delphi, *temet nosce* (γνώθι σεαυτόν), is the foremost question of philosophy, rejecting Camus’s claim of the supremacy of the question of suicide, which the framework I laid out addresses with clarity with respect to cognitive and ethical aspects. Remembering what often appears to become forgotten, i.e., the overarching pursuit of philosophy is that of understanding the world and, hence, philosophy done well must have real-world consequences, my thesis elucidates the scope of justified cognitive challenges of suicide and casts light on how the act should be judged morally.

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