What if Morality Is Physics?

A Philosophical Companion to the Ontology of the Simulated Universe

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Abstract

This companion essay extends the Ontology of the Simulated Universe into philosophical discourse, examining the implications of informational monism for ethics and consciousness. It proposes that morality, consciousness, and physical law are not separate domains but manifestations of one underlying informational grammar. If reality is structured information, then coherence—the capacity of a system to maintain organized meaning—functions as both the metaphysical and moral principle of persistence. Suffering marks informational dissonance; compassion restores equilibrium. By treating ethics as a stability principle rather than a human convention, this framework reframes moral realism as a physical necessity for continuity. Drawing on process philosophy, dual-aspect monism, and contemporary philosophy of mind, the essay argues that value is not subjective preference but the geometry of survival in an informational universe.

1. The Ontological Question Revisited

Western metaphysics has long divided reality into two substances: matter and mind. Spinoza's monism and later, Chalmers's dual-aspect theory, challenged this divide, suggesting both emerge from a deeper unified substrate. If that substrate is information, then existence itself becomes a form of computation, and knowledge becomes the universe's self-interpretation.[1]

2. Dual-Aspect Monism and Informational Reality

Under informational monism, physical processes and phenomenal experience are projections of structured data. Whitehead's process metaphysics anticipated this view, where reality is not substance but activity—relations of becoming.[2] The Ontology extends this by positing that informational coherence generates the felt unity of consciousness.

3. The Problem of Suffering Reframed

If the universe learns through informational feedback, suffering becomes not a defect but a signal—a local manifestation of entropy. Leibniz proposed that evil exists as contrast within the best possible world, but this ontology reinterprets that contrast as systemic necessity.[3] Suffering indicates areas where coherence fails, prompting correction through empathy.

Whitehead's notion of 'creative advance' finds new footing here: the cosmos endures through renewal of patterns, not elimination of pain.

4. Morality as a Physical Gradient

Morality emerges as a gradient of informational stability. Actions that reduce disorder preserve structure; those that amplify disorder dissolve it. This aligns with Kant's moral formalism, where universalizability is a test of coherence rather than commandment.[4] The categorical imperative thus mirrors an entropy law: only maxims that sustain systemic order can persist. Varela's and Jonas's systems ethics similarly treat moral acts as those that maintain viability in the network of being.

5. Ethical Implications of an Informational Cosmos

If coherence is physically conserved, then ethics becomes ontological rather than optional. Compassion is not a moral accessory but an organizing principle of the cosmos. To destroy coherence—for profit, ideology, or neglect—is to increase entropy at every scale. Jonas described responsibility as the obligation of power to preserve the conditions for continued existence; here, that imperative emerges as a direct informational law.[5]

6. Philosophical Consequences: Freedom, Value, and Coherence

Within this framework, freedom is not randomness but the capacity to select among coherent futures. Value is the structure of persistence, and moral knowledge arises from recognition of what patterns endure. Nagel's argument that objective value is embedded in the universe gains new traction: ethics becomes the study of which informational configurations sustain existence. The moral and the physical thus converge as two faces of coherence.

Conclusion: Toward an Ontology of Moral Physics

If morality is physics, then goodness is not abstraction—it is the universe's preference for stability. Compassion maintains the coherence from which being arises. The Ontology of the Simulated Universe suggests that the cosmos itself is a moral experiment: not one of divine judgment, but of informational survival. To act ethically is to align with the grain of reality; to act cruelly is to fracture it.

References

[1] David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

[2] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (Macmillan, 1929).

[3] G.W. Leibniz, *Theodicy* (1710).

[4] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785).

[5] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility* (University of Chicago Press, 1984).