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The Ascendancy of Natural Inclinations: A New Frontier for Body Awareness Therapy

White Paper

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Abstract

This white paper delves into a hypothesis called the *Ascendancy of Natural Inclinations* (ANI). The hypothesis states that: *The chronic suppression of a natural inclination leads to consequences opposite to its evolutionary purposes.* ANI does not specify how much suppression is required for the “chronic” level, nor if there is a level consistent across all natural inclinations. These questions may need to be empirically determined for each natural inclination and cannot be given in theory. A working definition of chronic is the level at which symptoms of an unhealthy physical or mental condition develop. Although many details remain to be discovered, the grounding in evolutionary and genetic frameworks enables ANI to explore both physiological and emotional inclinations. This study navigates through the conceptual underpinnings of ANI, its potential application in Body Awareness Therapy (BAT), and its broader implications in understanding human behavior and wellness. Scientific evidence for ANI is presented in analyses of physiological urges: pain, hunger, thirst, the urge to urinate, and sleep. This paper also explores the extrapolation of ANI into human emotions and its clinical application. Speculative predictions are offered for the chronic suppression of emotions: closeness, sadness, fear, and playfulness.

Introduction

The Ascendancy of Natural Inclinations (ANI) hypothesis posits a fundamental interplay between innate human tendencies and the conscious ability to override them. At the heart of this hypothesis is the exploration of how natural inclinations, arising from genetic predispositions, interact with conscious human decisions. ANI attempts to discover the impact of chronic suppression of these natural inclinations on physical and psychological well-being. In doing so, it endeavors to unveil how the divergence from these inherent tendencies could manifest in various health and behavioral issues. The hypothesis stems from a recognition of the human ability to act contrary to these natural inclinations, a trait that, while empowering, could potentially lead to detrimental effects when misaligned with our evolutionary design.

The inquiry into the realm of natural inclinations is neither novel nor uncharted; however, the ANI hypothesis elevates this inquiry to a nuanced scrutiny of the chronic suppression of these inclinations. It traverses beyond the mere identification of these inclinations to a meticulous exploration of the ramifications of their suppression, both on an individual and communal scale. Moreover, ANI seeks to resolve potential issues arising from such suppression, providing a theoretical scaffold to understand, and possibly mitigate, a myriad of behavioral and physiological conditions. This proposition is novel in its approach, seeking to provide a comprehensive framework that encapsulates the broad spectrum of human inclinations, both physiological and emotional.

The importance of the ANI hypothesis lies in its potential to bridge the often disparate realms of the social and physical sciences. By delving into the genetic and evolutionary underpinnings of human behavior while simultaneously exploring the social and individual dynamics of conscious decision-making, ANI offers a multidimensional lens to understand human behavior and wellness. This theoretical bridge fosters a holistic understanding, paving the way for interdisciplinary dialogues and collaborative efforts to address complex human challenges. The hypothesis holds the promise of unveiling a more integrated understanding of human nature, one that harmonizes the physical and social dimensions of our being.

Furthermore, the ANI hypothesis presents an opportunity to re-evaluate and possibly revolutionize existing therapeutic and self-care paradigms, such as Body Awareness Therapy (BAT). By identifying and addressing the chronic suppressions of natural inclinations, therapeutic interventions can become more aligned with the inherent human design, promoting a more naturalistic pathway to wellness and self-care. The ANI hypothesis, thus, holds significant implications for the scientific community, healthcare and broader societal wellness. It is hoped that this initial exploration of the Ascendancy of Natural Inclinations, begins a more nuanced, integrated, and holistic understanding of human behavior and well-being, fostering a dialogue that transcends disciplinary boundaries and resonates with the core essence of human nature.

Understanding Natural Inclinations

The concept of natural inclinations is rooted in the premise that humans possess inherent tendencies that guide their behaviors and responses to various stimuli. These inclinations, as proposed by the Ascendancy of Natural Inclinations (ANI) hypothesis, are conceived as genetic traits honed over the evolutionary timeline to foster survival, social cohesion, and overall well-being. The terminology encompassing the notion of natural inclinations is as varied as the disciplines that engage with it. From instinctive drives, inherent tendencies to innate predispositions, each term carries nuanced connotations that reflect different facets of human nature. The exploration of natural inclinations necessitates a journey into both the biological underpinnings that give rise to these inclinations and the experiential realm where they manifest and interact with conscious choice.

In scientific discourse, the terminology similar to "natural inclinations" is often employed to explore the genetic and evolutionary basis of human behavior. For instance, the field of evolutionary psychology delves into how evolutionary processes shape our mental and emotional faculties. However, the term "natural inclinations" as defined in the ANI hypothesis, narrows down the focus to those inclinations that are consciously experienced and guide behaviors. This differentiation is crucial as it carves out a specific niche within the broader domain of innate tendencies, focusing on the conscious experience and the ability to act contrary to these inclinations.

Philosophically, the discourse around natural inclinations often treads into the realms of free will, consciousness, and the human experience. The ANI hypothesis brings to light the juxtaposition of free will against the backdrop of natural inclinations, inviting a profound exploration of human agency. It posits a scenario where individuals, armed with the awareness of their natural inclinations, exercise their free will either in alignment or contradiction with these inclinations. This dialectic between natural

inclinations and free will is not merely a philosophical musing but holds tangible implications for understanding human behavior and devising therapeutic interventions.

Furthermore, the conceptualization of natural inclinations as genetic traits calls for a meticulous examination of the biological and genetic mechanisms underlying these inclinations. While the full identification of these mechanisms may not be crucial for the practical application of the ANI hypothesis, it nevertheless provides a robust foundation to appreciate the genesis and essence of these inclinations. The dialog between the experiential evidence and biological underpinnings enriches the understanding of natural inclinations, providing a multifaceted lens to engage with the ANI hypothesis.

Lastly, the discourse defining natural inclinations extends an invitation to bridge the often siloed domains of the social and physical sciences. By offering a theoretical framework that navigates the complex interplay between genetic traits, conscious experience, and social behaviors, the ANI hypothesis fosters an interdisciplinary dialogue. It challenges the conventional boundaries that separate these domains, advocating for a more holistic, integrated approach to understanding human behavior and wellness. As we delve deeper into the exploration of natural inclinations, we are beckoned to engage with the rich tapestry of human nature, weaving together the threads of biology, consciousness, and social experience into a coherent narrative.

Natural inclinations, viewed as a subset of innate tendencies, are consciously experienced impulses that guide behaviors and responses. These are considered genetic traits, honed over the evolutionary timeline to foster survival, social cohesion, and overall well-being. The terminology encompassing this concept extends to instinctive drives, inherent tendencies, and innate predispositions. The ANI hypothesis delineates natural inclinations as a critical aspect of human behavior, providing a scaffolding to explore their suppression and the consequent impact on individual and communal wellness. An underlying assumption of ANI is that human beings have the innate ability to act contrary to any consciously experienced influence. In this study, we assess the assertion that people can easily test this assumption for themselves by acting contrary to their natural inclinations. This ability is the mechanism by which natural inclinations are suppressed.

Transition from Hypothesis to Theory

Transitioning from hypothesis to theory in the scientific domain necessitates a stringent validation through empirical evidence. A hypothesis, which starts as a proposition to explain certain phenomena, evolves into a theory when supported by a substantial body of empirical evidence, subjected to rigorous testing and scrutiny within the scientific community. The Ascendancy of Natural Inclinations (ANI) hypothesis, while at a nascent stage, outlines a pathway that requires a compelling and scientifically rigorous body of evidence for its transition into a theory.

Various kinds of evidence, including experimental data, observational studies, and statistically significant correlations, are crucial for this transition. Natural inclinations where this data is available like for physiological urges, show unanimous support. However, extending the ANI hypothesis may initially require a novel form of evidence termed as "Anecdotal Community Benefit" derived from supporting aggregated anecdotal accounts, especially from an integration with Body Awareness Therapy (BAT).

While anecdotal evidence traditionally holds lesser weight in scientific circles, when aggregated and scrutinized, it could provide preliminary insights into the hypothesis's validity.

However, it's pivotal to note that communities may arrive at a consensus of belief for reasons other than tangible benefits, necessitating a careful interpretation of Anecdotal Community Benefit. Additionally, the placebo effect, a psychological response where individuals experience real changes based on their expectations rather than the treatment itself, further complicates the interpretation of anecdotal evidence. This phenomenon underscores the necessity of distinguishing between perceived benefits and scientifically validated benefits. The concept of Anecdotal Community Benefit can reflect a collective experiential validation which, although it may not be as rigorous as experimental evidence, still holds value in the early stages of hypothesis validation.

Historically, hypotheses have guided practices that yielded real benefits, yet were later proven incorrect in their foundational understanding. A notable example is that of Franz Lister, who believed antiseptics worked by eliminating cells within the wound that had turned renegade against the body. This hypothesis guided a practice that significantly reduced infections. However, it was Louis Pasteur who later demonstrated that infections were caused by external invaders, such as bacteria, thus refining the understanding of antiseptics. This historical precedent underlines the importance of rigorous scientific validation to ensure the accurate understanding and interpretation of phenomena, beyond anecdotal evidence and community consensus. Even without understanding, an edict that leads to efficacious practices like antiseptics is of great benefit.

Scientific Evidence and Predictions

This section delves into the well-defined natural inclinations like the Urge to Urinate, Pain, Hunger and Thirst, and Sleep, elucidating the evolutionary rationale, the ANI predictions, and the potential consequences of chronic suppression. Similarly, the emotional landscapes of Closeness, Sadness, Fear, and Playfulness are explored, providing a rich canvas to apply the ANI hypothesis and discern the profound implications of chronic suppressions of these emotions.

ANI diverges from hypotheses in Evolutionary Psychology, which are often critiqued for speculative assertions. ANI seeks to establish a tangible connection between natural inclinations, their suppression, and the consequent behavioral and physiological impacts, thereby offering a more grounded approach to explore human behavior and wellness.

Physiological Urges:

Urge to Urinate:

The urge to urinate serves as a physiological signal to eliminate waste from the body, crucial for maintaining homeostasis and preventing toxic buildup. Chronic suppression of this natural inclination can lead to urinary retention, infections, and in severe cases, kidney damage. The evolutionary purpose of this urge is clear: to maintain a healthy internal environment. The consequences of chronic suppression align with the ANI hypothesis, showcasing adverse effects opposite to the evolutionary intent of maintaining bodily health.

Pain:

Pain serves as a protective mechanism, signaling potential harm or underlying medical conditions. It drives individuals to seek relief or medical attention, thus promoting healing and preservation of well-being. Chronic suppression or ignoring pain, often seen in cases of chronic pain sufferers or misuse of pain medication, can lead to worsening medical conditions. Here again, the ANI hypothesis finds support; the consequences of suppressing the natural inclination of heeding pain are detrimental and counter to its evolutionary purpose of protection and healing.

Hunger and Thirst:

Hunger and thirst are fundamental signals for sustenance and hydration, essential for survival, energy sustenance, and overall functioning. Ignoring these signals chronically can lead to malnutrition, dehydration, and associated medical complications. The evolutionary purpose - survival and nourishment, is undermined through chronic suppression, mirroring the pattern proposed by the ANI hypothesis.

Sleep:

Though the exact evolutionary purpose of sleep is yet to be fully understood, it's well established that sleep plays a critical role in cognitive function, emotional well-being, and systemic health. Chronic suppression of sleep or sleep deprivation has well-documented adverse effects, including impaired memory, emotional instability, and heightened risk for chronic diseases. The detrimental effects of sleep suppression align with the adverse consequences posited by the ANI hypothesis, contrary to the presumed evolutionary purposes of rest, rejuvenation, and cognitive processing.

Emotions:**Closeness:**

Closeness, described as a pleasurable feeling of oneness between intimates typically experienced through physical contact or close proximity, likely has evolutionary roots in social cohesion, maternal bonding, and communal support, crucial for survival in early human societies. Chronic suppression of closeness may lead to dominating behaviors, possibly as a compensatory mechanism for the lack of social bonds and support. The contrast between the evolutionary purpose and the consequences of suppression supports the ANI hypothesis.

Fear:

Fear serves as a protective mechanism against potential threats, promoting survival. Suppression of fear may lead to recklessness, endangering oneself contrary to the evolutionary purpose of protection. The dichotomy between the evolutionary intent and consequences of suppression finds resonance with the principles of the ANI hypothesis.

Anger:

Anger, when appropriately channeled, can serve as a mechanism for addressing injustices or threats, promoting survival and social cohesion. However, suppression of anger can potentially lead to passive-aggressive behaviors or internalized distress, contrary to its evolutionary purpose of addressing and rectifying adversities.

Playfulness:

Playfulness, often seen as a mechanism for social bonding, learning, and stress relief, has its roots in evolutionary social dynamics. Suppression of playfulness could lead to social isolation, lack of learning opportunities, and increased stress, again showcasing a divergence from its evolutionary purpose, aligning with the ANI hypothesis.

The extrapolation of the ANI hypothesis from physiological urges to emotions underscores the comprehensive potential of this hypothesis. It proposes a framework that transcends the physical realm, delving into the complex emotional and social dynamics that shape human behavior. The ANI hypothesis holds out predictive value, proposing potential consequences of chronic suppression across a spectrum of natural inclinations, both physiological and emotional. This predictive value not only enriches the understanding of human behavior but also opens up avenues for therapeutic interventions and promoting holistic well-being.

ANI in Body Awareness Therapy (BAT)

Body Awareness Therapy (BAT) is a therapeutic approach that emphasizes the importance of body-mind integration. Through BAT, individuals are encouraged to tune into their physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts, recognizing the interconnectedness of these aspects. This form of therapy often employs mindfulness, physical movement, and breathing techniques to facilitate a deeper awareness and acceptance of one's body. By doing so, BAT aims to foster a harmonious body-mind relationship, which is instrumental in promoting overall well-being and addressing various psychological and physical ailments. The goal is to enhance self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-compassion, aiding individuals in navigating their internal and external experiences more effectively.

The Ascendancy of Natural Inclinations (ANI) hypothesis can significantly supplement the principles and practices of BAT. By identifying and addressing the chronic suppression of natural inclinations, ANI can provide a nuanced framework for understanding and working through the body-mind disconnect often encountered in therapy. For instance, depression, which may be seen as a chronic suppression of joy, could be explored through the lens of ANI within BAT. By recognizing and addressing the suppression of natural inclinations to experience joy, individuals may find a pathway towards alleviating depressive symptoms. Similarly, feelings associated with certain body parts, which may be suppressed due to negative judgments, can also be explored and worked through within this enriched BAT framework. This

approach can provide individuals with new tools and insights for navigating the complex interplay between their physical sensations and emotional experiences.

Furthermore, the notion of body image and its impact on one's well-being can also be explored through the lens of ANI within BAT. A distorted or incomplete body image, stemming from a chronic suppression of natural inclinations towards certain body parts deemed as 'ugly' for example, can lead to a myriad of negative psychological and physical consequences. ANI can provide a theoretical basis for understanding and addressing these distortions within BAT, aiding in the restoration of a more holistic and accepting body image. By restoring the natural inclinations to fully experience one's body and emotions, individuals may find a pathway towards alleviating the negative consequences associated with distorted body image and suppressed emotions, assuming the conditions have not progressed too far. The integration of ANI principles within BAT not only enriches the therapeutic process but also opens up new avenues for promoting holistic well-being and self-acceptance.

Body and mind are connected through perception. How we define situations substantially determines how we will act and react. Simple awareness of a chronic suppression may be enough to start a journey to change. Probably for most people, clinical assistance may be necessary to break engrained habits. If an ANI phenomenon is suspected as the cause of a client's symptoms, then the mechanism of suppression can be traced back to the natural inclination using the hypothesized connection. ANI can also be used in the other direction to infer expected consequences from a pattern of neglect in certain behaviors where no symptoms have been identified. The ANI hypothesis propounds a nuanced framework to delve into the chronic suppressions, their impact, and the therapeutic interventions to mitigate them, thereby enriching the BAT landscape.

Conclusion

The Ascendancy of Natural Inclinations hypothesis presents a profound exploration into the heart of human behavior and wellness. Empower Self-care is establishing BAT clinics worldwide guided by ANI and the Path of Least Resistance training. ANI stands as a beacon, illuminating the path towards enhanced self-awareness, communal well-being, and a deeper understanding of our evolutionary heritage. The exploration and application of ANI in Body Awareness Therapy beckon a promising frontier in fostering a holistic approach to self-care and therapy, marking a significant stride towards unveiling the intricacies of human behavior and wellness.

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William Farlinger first proposed ANI in his 2010 published book, 'The Path of the Pure Creature'. He is now working with software startup, memaree, to create a new health focused social media platform called Clean. He expects to launch BAT clinics across Canada and the USA in 2024 through the website bodywork.health under his company Empower Self-care.