

HUMAN IDENTITY AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

John McMurtry

*University Professor Emeritus, Department of Philosophy, University of Guelph,
Canada*

Keywords: abortion, the absurd, biology, consciousness, criteria, death, ecology of life value, economics, evolution, felt bonds of being, the mean, human identity, infinite, life-value logic of analysis, life-value test, love, market theory, meaning of life, non-positional consciousness, personal identity, right to life, science, social forms, soul, universal life goods, witness consciousness

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Summary

This concluding section of the Theme level writing— ‘Philosophy and World Problems’— lays bare the inner logic of a comprehensive range of theories of human identity and the meaning of life to complete life-value onto-axiology as a universal philosophy of personal, social and planetary existence.

13.1. Beyond the ‘Right-to-Life’ Confusion

A stubborn block against understanding life value has been deep confusion on the concepts of “pro life” and “right-to-life”. The confusion lies in their confinement to a narrow case of life, if a life at all - the embryo within a woman’s body and its first period of gestation. Life-value analysis recognizes what is elsewhere unexamined, the invalid restriction of ‘right to life’ to an early reproductive moment of it, and the

categorization of this position as ‘pro-life’. That all other ‘pro life’ and ‘right to life’ positions are thereby blocked out, including the life of the pregnant life host herself, is a fallacious structure of assumption. This is why the pregnant woman’s claim to a right to *her* life – to discontinue the pregnancy she is carrying - is falsely implied to be both ‘anti-life’ in nature and against the ‘right to life’ of human beings; while this very ‘pro-life’ and ‘right to life’ advocacy itself may be perfectly indifferent to young people’s lives in the wider world. These contradictory meanings are not confined to the rhetoric of a political sect, but have been normalized across public and professional discourses. For example, we do not hear of the ‘right to life’ of the tens of thousands of children who die daily from preventable lack of clean water, nor of the concept of ‘pro life’ applied to the social advocacy which condemns this mass human sacrifice. Ironically, those most outspoken about alleged ‘mass killing of babies’ show no evident concern to protect poor infants and children.

So widespread is this standardized inversion of the concepts ‘pro life’ and ‘right to life’ that when the author first introduced life-value theory to the Canadian Philosophical Association’s Annual Meeting in 1998, a well-known feminist philosopher repudiated the idea as ‘pro-life’ advocacy against woman’s choice. The author reports this event to illustrate the metaphysical stupefaction around this issue. When even a distinguished feminist philosopher cannot tell the difference between life-value understanding and opposition to women’s choice, and the other side cannot either, the muddle reveals just how life-value blind received positions can be even on the issue of life value itself. Life-value onto-axiology thus faces a hostile context in more ways than this study has so far explained – here as a downstream operation of the ruling syntax of value which is indifferent to life value by its nature. So it is worthwhile examining this dispute more deeply, enlisting as it does governments, social movements and moral philosophers arguing on both sides. What has not been seen by any is that the concept of ‘*pro-life*’ itself *excludes almost all of life from its referent*. A rupture of confusion on the nature of life itself thus distorts both public and expert fields of meaning.

13.1.1 Applying the Method of Life-Value Analysis to Re-Ground Human-Life Meaning

As it stands, the issue which is seen poses “woman’s right to choose” as in ultimate conflict with “the right to life of the unborn human being”. Legions of people, states, activists and rights theorists adopt one side or the other in sustained elaboration of the one or the other position. What is in common among them is that all ignore the ultimate life-ground of value which life-value onto-axiology starts from – that is, that life is good, and is better the more coherently inclusive its thought, felt being and action (i.e., the more it satisfies the primary axiom of value). In contrast, virtually all disputants on the issue adopt the standard standpoint of exclusive rights in either-or opposition. As elsewhere, life-value understanding moves to a deeper and ultimate plane of analysis. It unpacks these unseen stacks of assumption into seven steps of the *life-value logic of resolution* which applies across domains of dispute. That is, this life-value logic:

- (1) Moves underneath all either-or exclusions to the common ground of life value to
- (2) Apply an impartial life-value test to both sides. Thus,
- (3) The normalized circle of sterile conflict in which each side obscures the underlying principle of life value in attachment to one aspect of it is re-set

- (4) To identify exactly what is at stake in life-capacity gain/loss in any conflict, so as
- (5) To establish the extent to which each position stands for or against life value; and so
- (6) Exposes false partialities masking or distorting the underlying life-value issue that ultimately counts, with
- (7) One ultimate criterion of life-value/disvalue applied as standard and measure throughout, the formal axiom of life value and its converse.

With respect to the woman's "right to choose" whether to continue bearing an embryo or fetus, it follows, life-value analysis recognizes that the principal life value and capacities exist in the person who actually bears the organic life. Gain or loss of life-value and decision on how to live is hers by the objective life coordinates of life itself. For she alone in the world is the direct experiencer and carrier of the life. This is not an argument for private property, as the woman's right has been often reduced to. It is a life-value diagnosis which explains and limits right claims. At the embryonic stage, all concept and image thought is borne by her. The felt side of being within is carried by her. She not anyone else lives the action of the one organism. All of these facts are undeniable – that is, they cannot be life-coherently denied – and all are basic to the 'right to life' of the pregnant woman herself and the fields of life she organically bears. The embryo bears little or none of them. Yet it gradually so qualifies in growing through the ontogeny of embryonic existence to fetal differentiation to eventually the stage when an organic human being has developed: that is, when it is no longer only "part of the woman's body", but a self-organizing unity capable of independent fields of life learning, sentience, affect and body action (i.e., the fetus could be delivered), however infantile these fields of life value still may be.

Thus in accordance with this development by life-value measure, the embryo/fetus within the woman's organism *is* of intrinsic worth insofar as it realizes and bears these life fields and value – beginning with intra-uterine movement, feeling side of being, and image thought in early form. Yet conversely, in proportion to non-existence of these fields of life value, the embryo or fetus is correspondingly lower in life value – not only, as Aldous Huxley clinically observes in *Point Counter Point*, "a potential fish", but also an eventual human being. Life-value analysis does not validate the imagined future of someone who never exists any more than it values the image of a future full-grown fish at this stage. Yet it recognizes that projective imagination and its embryonic referent have life-value in their own right. In short, analysis is brought to ground by life-value standard. It therefore affirms the right of bearing mother and embryo/fetus as life value to the extent of fields of life borne – not by mere projection, which in this age has also revealingly conferred rights of super persons on lifeless corporate stocks. Moving beneath false projection of person rights onto non-persons, life-value understanding also recognizes what has been lost by this projection – that *together* woman and her gestation have compounded life value in *one* life, the pregnant woman. Here they incorporate in their unity opposing life values only by conceptually constructed reification of a non-person as a person. This is a metaphysical conceit which has oppressed the world at different levels. The passionate certitude with which such false reifications are proclaimed is long familiar in totems and cults, but now has many political legs. Imposing the rights of fabricated persons onto real-life persons is the problem. What is morally deranged is that the rights of non-persons and their interests override the life interests of real persons in the name of life.

At the most general level, life-value understanding stands for an opposite onto-ethic. It stands for what takes into account all sides from one common life ground of meaning: that is, what coherently enables life at all levels - *the life coherence principle*; and what upholds the value of life to the most inclusive level possible without life-value loss - *the life compossibility principle*. Life-value research finds that in fact almost any case of life-sacrificial trade-off is preventable beforehand, including abortions: although one would hardly know this in the endless of the “necessity” of pesticides, prisons, lay-offs, environmental destruction, foreign wars, and so on, all of which sacrifice human and fellow life in vast swathes at various levels. Revealingly, all of these are led or condoned by those ascribing person rights to non-persons.

13.2. From Human Life as Absurd to the Ecology of Life Value

The famous words of Ecclesiastes in the *Old Testament* testify to a long-haunting idea of the human condition. “Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I spent doing it, and, behold, all was vanity, and a striving after wind, and there was nothing new under the sun”.

Certainly the rule of the non-living over the living is not new in ruling structures of power. Yet this is a disorder philosophy is apt to avoid. The absurdity of human life itself is preferred. Thomas Nagel so prefers in his resonant article “The Absurd” (1968). He claims that human life is absurd from a reflective standpoint which recognizes the contradiction between a person’s commitment to life’s continuous tasks of work, family and so on as what really matters, and the known fact that “nothing we do now will matter in a million years”. Nagel argues that it is absurd for anyone to go on *being* so committed when rational reflection teaches us we “will eventually vanish without a trace” and there are always “unsettlable doubts regarding any larger purpose that encourages the sense that life is meaningful”. One is confronted with a “detached amazement”, he says, that we could so live the absurd life. Yet, he concludes, this does not “really present us with a *problem* to which some solution must be found”. Rather it allows us to be fully human – to “transcend ourselves in thought” and “to approach our absurd lives with irony instead of heroism or despair”.

Nagel distinguishes his position from that of the existentialist Albert Camus whose famous *Myth of Sisyphus* published in 1941 is concerned with the issue of suicide as “the ultimate philosophical question” in the face of an “indifferent and hostile universe” where one is condemned to death in any case. Camus rejects suicide, and finds in the mythic Sisyphus a philosophical model to explain why. Sisyphus was condemned by the gods to roll a heavy rock uphill only to have it fall all the way down again so as to imprison him in this useless round forever. (Sisyphus was according to the story a deceitful murderer, but neither Nagel nor Camus pay attention to that.) Instead Camus reasons that human commitment to a task with nothing but the committed doing of it is a defiant human meaning which “uplifts from strength to strength”. “I picture Sisyphus as happy”, he concludes. These eminent philosophers both agree in conceiving human existence as absurd. But Nagel sees absurdity in the contradiction between our commitment to what we are doing in life and our “unsettlable doubt” about any wider frame of meaning to justify it when we step back to reflect on our condition. He does not share Camus’ anguish about, an “indifferent universe” which “fails to meet our

demand for meaning”. And he does not with Camus find nobility in “contempt for the gods” or existential defiance of man’s condemned lot. Nagel’s affirmation, rather, is of our uniquely human capacity to “transcend ourselves in thought” above our mortal and limited condition.

13.2.1. Opening to the Ultimate Choice Space of Human Life

Life-value onto-axiology can agree with both philosophers. It can agree with Nagel that that humanity’s capacity to move to a non-positional consciousness *of* our life condition is of utmost and uniquely human value, indeed of infinite value as explained in analysis of this non-positional “thought field” in chapter The Primary Axiom and the life value Compass. It can also agree with Camus and his irreducible existential bravery in the face of an indifferent universe to choose to live fully and with commitment in felt being and action no matter *how* rigged against the human vocation it is by external powers – the lot of most impoverished people in the world today. Life-value understanding affirms these stands of human life identity and meaning within a universe that does indeed swallow individual lives indifferently. Yet it is on these accounts that life-value onto-axiology insists on going beyond the resolutions of ironic detachment in a “view from nowhere” (Nagel) and unbreakable defiance of one’s imposed lot in existential commitment (Camus). The problem once again is the atomic trap of human identity and meaning to which these positions are confined. However life-value understanding may agree with their pathways of resolution *from* this condition, a life-grounded onto-ethic requires one’s contribution to better the condition itself, an obligation of its *ecology of life value*. Neither philosopher nor indeed most philosophers appreciate that every moment of their lives depends on and is borne by this wider ecology of life value they are enjoyers of and participants in. Nor does either, or any contemporary philosopher we are likely to know, recognize the uniquely human life capacity to *contribute life value to it* for as long as this wider social and natural life host evolves, and that could be effectively forever. One’s individual organism may dissolve back into this eco-social life host, but *it* is changed forever in some small or significant way by one’s life – even at the physics level of the fourth dimension of time.

Herein lies the ultimate choice space of human life and its meaning. Life-value understanding conceives the nature of the choice as choosing through every moment towards enabling or disabling the human and ecological life support systems out of which one came and returns to as better or worse by one’s life - most particularly now as these life support systems are allowed to be cumulatively depredated by a man-made system of despoliation. While the underlying civil commons analyzed in the prior sections of this study are the macro human host and agency of this evolution, Camus and Nagel, typically of the age, disconnect from this life-ground dynamic and each person’s life function within it. They do not recognize the fateful choice space between leaving the world as indifferent to life value as before and contributing to humanity’s civil commons advance. The larger world in which one’s life span is embedded is assumed as an indifferent maw in which no trace of people’s lives ultimately remains. This is a reductive simplification which abstracts out the individual’s ongoing role within this dynamic life host which is, in fact, influenced, however imperceptibly, by each one’s lifetime within it. This is what the human identity identifies with.

13.2.2. Under the God of Tolstoy and Kierkegaard: The Meaning of Life in the Lost Infinite of the World

The great writer, Leo Tolstoy, holds also that human life is meaningless in itself, but does not cope with it, as Camus and Nagel do, by understanding and resolution at the individual level. “My question”, the one which led me, at fifty years, up to suicide,” explains Tolstoy, “was the simplest kind of question which is lying in the soul of every man - - The question is: ‘What will come of my whole life?’” It is revealing to life-value understanding that Tolstoy only confronts this question after “being surrounded on every side by what is considered to be complete happiness - - beloved wife, good children, a large estate - - in full command of my physical powers - - and more than ever was praised by strangers and, without any self-deception, could consider my name famous” (*My Confession*, 1905). The “meaning of my life was still always, ‘you are a temporal, accidental conglomeration of particles’”. The “meaning of my life”, Tolstoy concludes, “is *None*”.

Only, Tolstoy continues, “by the relation of the finite to the infinite could there be an answer”. The next and ultimate step he takes is somewhat familiar, but certainly different from the secular understandings of Camus and Nagel. He says: “No matter how I may put the question, ‘How must I live?’ the answer is ‘According to God’s law - - [and] the only “meaning which is not destroyed by death [is] – the union with infinite God, paradise”. Life-value onto-axiology recognizes Tolstoy’s account as well-known in professional philosophy as well. The one which comes to mind most clearly is the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard which we encountered in Section 7.4. Yet there is a radical difference within Tolstoy’s and Kierkegaard’s turning from the finite to the infinite for a meaning to life. Kierkegaard, does not as Tolstoy, *bridge* the finite to the infinite by “union of the individual soul with God and paradise”, but rather the opposite. The individual is made prostrate in awe and trembling in his finitude by the purely transcendent power of God where “only the truth of the Incarnation of Christ” is accessible to experience.

Life-value analysis takes issue with the first step of argument which decouples from this world to find ground and meaning in the transcendent infinite of God. The central claim is that life in this world is essentially worthless in its finitude. For Tolstoy, human life without the otherworldly infinite is in the end merely “a temporal, accidental conglomeration of particles” which in death “destroys every possible meaning of it”. Life-value onto axiology recognizes, on the contrary, that an infinite is implicit *in* humanity’s life. It is not *merely* “the bourgeois mawkishness, torpor and sloth of the establishment” (Kierkegaard) or “a temporal, accidental conglomeration of particles” (Tolstoy). The implicit infinite of the embodied human condition already lies in its prior physical and cultural evolution which through infinite possibilities becomes physically encoded in human genes which eventually ensure in innumerable stored adaptations that almost every disease or carcinogenic sequence is recognizable by the body’s over three-billion-year development of immune system which began out of an estimated pre-life history of 13.7 billion years. Then there is the cultural evolution of humanity and civil commons over recent thousands of years which has developed every kind of social life support system to organize and create universal human life goods from language, arts and ever-advancing knowledge stocks to common water, waste cycles and modern

electricity sources which are all governed by social rules systems which, in turn, manifest the unseen universal moral operators formulated by the primary axiom of value.

As we have seen in the prior five sections, these long-evolving community bases of life-enabling powers of human being form a this-worldly creation *across death* on which all rely to exist as human, and are more than ever at a turning point of their advance or regression – hardly a temporal, accidental conglomeration of particles or a bourgeois deadness of spirit. These comprehensions miss the underlying and cumulative infinitude of humanity’s ecological and civil commons developments over aeons and epochs, the omnipresent life host of possibilities which has been almost everywhere blinkered out. Herein lies humanity’s ultimate project and life-value meaning, a this-worldly infinite in process. It is remarkable that this infinite fabric of uplifting human life into which people are born, contribute to or not, and pass on within as the common life host of all could be so screened out. In the case of someone like Tolstoy whose ‘soon-dead’ life has, on the contrary, become a living field of sensitivity and voice to world society long after his passing, a precisely non-finite process is disclosed. Indeed the cumulative field of human life consciousness in which his life is a participating presence is an ongoing evolution of god-like consciousness powers through time, a deathless human subject which all benefit from as they become one with and extend it by their lives. When one considers as well that Tolstoy himself became through his crisis of death confrontation founder of a community of Christian-communist belief which lives on into the present in Canada thousands of miles away from his home in another country and long after his organic dissolution, the dualism he presupposes between the finite insignificance of human life and the divine infinite is rebutted by his own place in this wider human life process. It is not the “extra-temporal, extra-causal, extra-spatial meaning of life” he claims in the onto-ethical schism of modernity he expresses. Rather, Tolstoy reveals what life-value onto-axiology recognizes as the collective *life unconscious* seeking expression in a life-disconnected form. While mainstream society continues to worship its atomic order as totem, the evolving life-grounded infinite is repressed and displaced onto an inscrutable and otherworldly God. Life-value onto-axiology instead re-grounds – not as Feuerbach does in God as an inversion of Man, but, more deeply, in the *lost infinitude between boundless consciousness within and civil commons evolution without*. God in some sense – for example, William James’ “mother sea of consciousness” - may be behind both, but as such is bridged to humanity, not alienated from its process of becoming.

13.3. Platonic Love as the Meaning of Human Longing for a Better World

In the classical period of Western philosophy, the meaning of life and human identity is found in a different way - in *the pure intellect* as divine element within. Plato’s Theory of Forms has been critiqued elsewhere in this study, especially in its twentieth-century versions which are argued by the onto-ethics of Franz Brentano and Nicolai Hartmann. Both conceive moral values as akin to the pure forms of mathematics in which an objective certitude is found in a noumenal realm whose order is eternal and independent of perception of it. Plato with Socrates more radically posit a pure and transcendental realm of eternal Ideas of which all material entities are inferior, mutable copies. The embodied world here is conceived as inferior, but not “absurd”, and not to be resolved

in terms of an Old Testament or Christian God. The *bridging between* this-worldly phenomena and an other-worldly eternity is believed possible, and its “laddering to heaven” in human consciousness is resonantly explained by Socrates in Plato’s dialogue, *The Symposium*.

Looking for the source of *the motive of love*, “the oldest and most glorious of the Gods”, Socrates (180-209) makes clear that what is being sought must be “fixed or permanent” or it is transitory and inferior. Socrates argues that this eternal object of Love is everywhere dimly presupposed, “the sole concern of every rite of sacrifice and divination (“the means of communion between god and man”), but is overwhelmed by material objects of concern. For the philosopher, however, “the creative power by which all living things are begotten and brought forth is the very genius of Love”, and it is for its eternal Idea that he searches. Life-value understanding, in contrast, would look for the “genius of Love” in natural and human life support systems, by which in fact all living things are brought forth and nourished. Yet Plato allows no such life-grounded meaning. A personified Idea, Love, is instead posited as the Source, a decoupling from the life-ground that begins millennia of variations on the theme. For no Platonic form including Love admits of change in itself, only changes of our perception of it. Yet clearly natural and human life support systems, although permanent, are also perpetually changing. They therefore lack that eternal fixity which characterizes the pure Ideas or Forms, or God, the religious counterpart. Whatever is mutable joins the inferior world of transitory appearances.

13.3.1. Decoding Platonic Love: Needs Marry Resources to Beget Search for Truth

“Love is always love of something which is lacked”, Socrates continues, and this introduces a paradox of how a Form which is perfect could lack anything. At this point, a new character enters the dialogue who Socrates cites as knowing the answer to the problem - Diotima, the woman “who taught me the philosophy of Love”. An interesting mythic tale ensues in which Love is explained as “the son of Resource and Need”, the former “having drunk of the heavenly nectar” as the male Resource to provide for his lover Need, and they thus are thus brought to “the bed of Love” to create “their son of Love” whose “fate has been to be always needy - - barefoot and homeless - - always partaking of his mother’s poverty but also a lifelong seeker after truth”. So, one could say, *the natural and human life-ground has always too been both in perpetual Need for Resource to satisfy it, with the quest for Truth their offspring unbound by possession*. Need = the universal life necessities. Resource = the means to fulfill them. Truth = the life- coherence principle. It is remarkable how the ancient mythic-philosophical finds a correlative meaning in life-value onto-axiology at this bare level. At the same time, a dynamic process of change is admitted into the Form of Love as explained to Socrates by the “woman who knows the philosophy of Love”. One might here observe a further and unexpected correlative of meaning with life-value philosophy. Woman who teaches Socrates of Love is in life-value onto-ethics the mother that teaches the civil commons: that is, her life incorporates the civil commons principle in the original form of ensuring the access of all to human life goods, the maternal ground of the meaning of the home and household (*oekonomia*). In an otherwise conflicted world of selves competing for survival and ever more for self at the cost of others, the mother of the household introduces the civil commons meaning of life. Where does the systematic analogue of

meaning stop? Let us find out.

“Then tell me, Diotima”, Socrates asks, “who are these seekers after truth if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant?” “Love”, she answers, “is a lover of wisdom, and thus is placed between wisdom and ignorance - - the spirit of love”. But “what is the lover of the beautiful longing for?” she asks. “He is longing”, answers Socrates, “to make the beautiful his own”. “Very well, Socrates”, she answers, “what is that the lover of the *good* longing for?” “To make the good his own”, answers Socrates. Both agree. “Love”, she continues, “includes *every* kind of longing”. At this point, life-value understanding introduces another general observation. “Longing” is an unheard word in contemporary philosophy and economics. Yet its force of meaning, as Socrates and Diotima know well, taps into the very core of human being and its quest. It is, adds life value onto-axiology, the ultimate direction of humanity’s felt side of being, the motivating impulsion of becoming better as individual or society , the human vocation as life feeling towards the life now lacked. Yet this longing does not exist for contemporary second-order thought. It has, rather, been driven under by system conditioning to a self-maximizing meta-program operating at all levels - as explained in Chapter Reclaiming Rationality And Scientific Method::The Life-Coherence Principle As Global System Imperative. This longing of humanity for what it lacks is so deeply driven under that those many who inhabit the ruling form of behavior cannot conceive there could be anything else to motivate anyone, and *reproduce the world accordingly*. This is thought to be “rational” and “scientific”, but demonstrates the opposite to be true by its ruinous outcomes. The life-coherence principle of deep validity in science and rationality is, on the contrary, led by longing for cohesion with the requirements of planetary life’s reproduction and life-value advance. “Making them our own” is humanity’s underlying vocation and meaning.

Yet Diotima clarifies an ultimate difference between the Idea of Love and its expression in the world. “The longing is not for the beautiful [or good] itself”, she advises, “but for the conception and generation that it affects”. She insists with Socrates’ agreement that this conception is forever *the same* and unchanging whereas in the mutable world of human being itself we are never the same “so that even in our knowledge we are not - - - we have to study - - we forget - - and so it is never the same as it was before”. Only “*the deathless*”, they agree, can satisfy the longing (emphases as elsewhere are added). Thus “the beauties of the corporeal are as nothing to the beauties of the soul” and in our turning to “the open sea of beauty” and “in contemplation” and “loftiest thought”, one “comes upon at last “*one single form* of knowledge, the knowledge of the beauty - - - the final revelation”. “Starting from individual beauties the quest for the universal beauty must find him ever mounting the heavenly ladder - - until at last he comes to know beauty itself - - For it is given to man to see the heavenly beauty face to face - - - [and so] the enviable life is – to him who gazed upon it in true contemplation until it had become his own”. Life-value understanding can continue the decoding of this mythic dialogue of classical idealism at its height in life-value terms, and remain in full agreement with the perpetual longing for better, the ascent of the soul to universal and unifying deathless principle, and the ‘making it one’s own’ as the living of it as one’s this-world meaning.

13.3.2. Platonic versus Life-Value Onto-Axiology

Where is there disagreement then? The disagreement ultimately lies in the *life-grounded* versus *transcendentally grounded* nature of the onto-axiologies in question. While both agree there can be and is a universal and unifying form of limitlessly valid principle, the content of their meaning is opposed in these ways. Life-value onto-axiology recognizes its ultimate principle of the primary axiom, the Final Form, as (1) *immanent* in the planetary life system and its human evolution, but unseen; (2) *developing* in the world through recognition and this-worldly agency, not transcendentally given; and (3) deathless in its being so, but *not as a self-subsisting noumenal abstraction*. Thus whereas Platonic understanding conceives the beautiful and the good as independent of human intelligence and life, as “fixed and eternal”, and as perfect and complete in “one single form”, life-value understanding is oppositely dynamic in conception. It holds the ultimate, unifying and unlimitedly valid principle to be life-grounded, conceptualized by human intelligence, destructible in fact by global social-system derangement, dependent on socially constructive choice paths of development to be constituted in reality by an historical process which is always open to further advance or regression.

Consider a specific example of radical opposition that can arise from these different onto-ethical logics of the good. Life-value onto-ethics could not agree, as Plato and Socrates implicitly did, that slavery is a natural and necessary form of higher social life and the rational element of the soul of masters properly in command of slaves, women and children. The *life-value test of truth* is multiply failed by this classical conception. It *cannot* in principle qualify under the generic life-value question – are the fields of thinking life, felt being and action enabled in more coherently inclusive ranges of life than without it? (i.e., the primary axiom in interrogative form). Human slavery can be so justified in *attempt*, as we have seen with Nietzsche, but his argument was demonstrated to be self confuting. In short, where agreement does remain between Platonic and life-value understanding is on the possibility of a single unifying and ultimate principle of value with unlimited validity which can be lived as who one is.

13.4. The Aristotelian Return to Earth and the Immanence of the Soul

Aristotle was Plato’s student, as Plato was the student of Socrates. But Aristotle leads a great onto-axiological shift away from their mooring in transcendental Ideas separate from the terrestrial world. His central principle, as we have seen, is that the good is always that which any entity thing aims to achieve in accord with its *nature*. The purely supra-sensible Ideas of Plato which subsist autonomously in a fixed noumenal realm are *made immanent* within embodied beings – the inner logic of Aristotle’s philosophical revolution. The good of human being, he argues, is *the fulfillment of his or her human essence (Reason), and the development of human faculties to the utmost (Eudaimonia, or happiness by self-realization)*.

While the dominant Christian philosophy of Thomism has adopted this framework of Aristotle’s philosophy, it adds the Supreme Deity of traditional theism as omnibenevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient over all that exists. This theist conception has also led to Platonic versions of God and world such as Augustine’s and, more so, Neo-Platonism, but explanation here will not enter into this much examined terrain. It will

instead attend to Aristotelian argument not covered by the work of Alastair MacIntyre critiqued in Chapter Traditions As Moral Anchor In An Age Of Criterionless Relativism.

Aristotle's key idea for all life that exists on the planet is the fulfillment of its distinguishing *telos* of nature, whether a flower, horse or man. "Nature does nothing without some purpose", Aristotle says, and for man the meaning of life is to realize his nature as the "*rational animal*". This means a rational politics for man as also a "political animal" (*zoon politikon*), and Aristotle here – to put the matter most simply and revealingly - comes down on the side of that form of a society which has the largest middle class. Yet like Socrates and Plato, Aristotle also thought that women, children and slaves were properly subjugated as instruments of their master: "For that which can foresee by the exercise of mind is by nature intended to be lord and master, and that which can with its body give effect to such foresight is a subject and by nature a slave" (*Politics*, 1252 a). Again, life-value analysis observes that the ultimate nature of rationality assumed here is life incoherent. It presupposes what is inconsistent with life requirements and capacities, namely that most of society is incapable of mental foresight and must be subjugated. In ultimate onto-ethical opposition, life-value onto-axiology asserts a natural capacity for reason in all human beings, and it tracks a more widely conceived social intelligence across generations of which the civil commons is the bearer. This more complex and life-coherent rationality is not bound by any ruling-class illusion. It is organized by the rights and obligations of citizens to provide sufficient universal human life goods by which the life capacities and human vocation of all are enabled through time. Thus rationality and foresight are not segregated into a reigning sect's higher nature, but built into society's processes of reproduction in which all members participate - for simple demonstration, in daily practices of hygiene and tax payment for public water-sewer systems and healthcare that sustain and enable contemporary society's life. If one replies that progressive society has changed a lot since Aristotle, as it certainly has, this confirms the meaning which life-value onto-axiology affirms.

13.4.1. From the Mean Between Extremes to the Life Coherent

Aristotle most famously emphasized the ethic of "mean between extremes" – for example, the mean of courage between rashness and cowardice, or the mean of moderation between parsimony and squandering. This ethical philosophy is immensely influential, but provides no criterial principles to set the extremes between which to choose, or to find the mean between them. So this canonical standard of "practical wisdom" (*phronesis*) may appeal to intuition, but remains without principled grounds. Consequently, what is conventionally thought to be the wise mean between extremes can merely *appear* to be so with no way of penetrating beneath a facile middle ground to the life-blindness it may bear as merely seeming wisdom. This is the central problem with accepted norms including "the golden mean" and "middle path" and allows by implication in Aristotle's ethics, for example, the activity of hunting men for slaves with courage rather than cowardice as virtuous, or treating the subjugated members of one's family moderately rather than too generously as the mean of wisdom. The problem here is profound. Applied to world problems, how can the mean or middle ground between, say, charging 5% and 20% compound interest on people's homes - historical poles in

recent decades - identify the wise in- between ratio? Or how can the middle ground between a social ostracism or lashes for female adulterers versus stoning them to death turn up a wise mean? It all depends on the range of the extremes assumed which together with finding the mean between them without impartial standards generates arbitrary parameters of decision. The center of gravity ends up being the wider context of convention in which these issues are embedded, promoting as ‘practical wisdom’ a mere sitting on the fence of custom between non-accepted deviations one way or the other. Life-value onto-ethics advances instead the standard of what is more inclusively enabling of people’s lives in accordance with the primary axiom, even if the position that leads to is thought extreme through the reigning syntax of value of the society in question (e.g., all home loans by a public-utility bank, and all punishment for adulterers a personal moral issue).

13.4.2. From the Eternal Element of Mind to the Ecology of Life Value and its Law Body

Nonetheless the Aristotelian turn brings philosophy back to the terrestrial world and is the first Western philosophy of organized empirical knowledge or “science” as we have come to know it. We know in overview principle what his concept of “human identity” is, “the rational animal” distinguished by foresight of mind to govern self and others; and we know in general that the “meaning of life” for human beings is to realize this *differentia specifica* of humanity, including by learning the nature or inner purpose or *entelechy* of other terrestrial beings that distinguish them and their reproduction through this-worldly time. Yet Aristotle also thought that human reason or *nous* was a “divine element” in man – here agreeing with Socrates and Plato – and he emphasizes that only so far the mind is set free from its embeddedness in temporal materiality can it experience its divine element. “When the mind is set free from its present conditions it appears as just what it is and nothing more,” he says, “this alone is immortal and eternal” (*De Anima*, 430a). Thus he continues elsewhere, “If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life in accordance with it is divine in comparison to human life - - - we must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177b).

Life-value understanding can certainly agree with the idea of living in accordance with reason, but requires that a more exacting criterion of reason be lived by - *coherence with human and ecological life requirements*. Observe how this seems to oppose Aristotle’s notion of reason as divine in nature only so far as it “is set free from its present conditions”. Yet one could argue that ecological and civil commons consciousness are “immortal” even in this way insofar as they ground in ultimate principles of coherent regulation through time – a kind of “law body” of understanding the world *sub specie aeternitatis*. Such a standard of reason, however, moves beyond and underneath Aristotle’s and other received standards of rationality by these macro life-value provisions. It also clearly rules out vicious but accepted norms conceived as “rational” – a problem spelled out systematically in the prior sections of this study. It includes relations to environmental as well as human necessities for life capacities to compossibly function and flourish together, the ultimate dividing line of good from bad. Thus the human vocation and meaning of life which follow from life-value philosophy lead to a profoundly different answer to how to live on both individual and social levels.

13.4.3. The Point of Life is to Live Fully What It Is One's Will To Be

At a general level, the self-realization of human and other beings in accordance to their nature is accepted by life-value philosophy with these very important and complex qualifications. There are many forms of self-realizationist ethics. A more Nietzschean form comes from Richard Taylor's book, *Good and Evil* (1970). Taylor adopts this general frame of self-realization ethics, and applies it to the myth of Sisyphus and a biological case of a larva-fly lifespan to weave a compelling case for the deceptively simple conclusion that "the point of living is simply to be living". We may summarize his argument in the following formula. *To travel is better than to arrive in the realizing of what it is one's nature or will to be as the end in self of life's meaning.*

It does not ultimately matter, suggests Taylor, what one's lot of being is or even its ultimately purposeless round. What really matters is the life given and experienced *through* living it. Yet again the fate of Sisyphus is an illustration. And yet again there is in this age no mention of his being a serial murderer luring his victims by diabolical cunning. Life-value analysis reiterates this point because it observes a relationship between the life so lived and its fate on social as well as individual levels. Such a form of life deserves what it reaps of meaningless labor forever. Having rendered so many other human lives and life capacities hopeless and futile by destroying their implicitly infinite human being without any cause but self-aggrandizement, Sisyphus gets his own back in spades. It is what the literary call poetic justice. Life-value understanding can thus discern an unseen moral parable about such behavior and its apparent impunity – more evident than ever in the world today – an underlying revenge tale of higher fate reaped by continual homicidal greed and deceit. In such ways, life-value analysis penetrates beneath unexamined assumptions by searching out the underlying life coordinates rather than chewing on an idealized set story.

In any case, Taylor too reads the Sisyphus tale at face value – a man facing a cruel and arbitrary fate of meaningless hard labor forever – and he turns it into meaningfulness by a shift to a *motive force* for the labor. Taylor recognizes well as do Camus and Nagel (poetic justice aside) that the fate of Sisyphus rolling rocks can be seen as the lot of all of us in our daily grind. Taylor's philosophical move is now to ask, but what if he embraces his labor as, say, "a compulsive impulse to move stones"? Again we may consider this motivation too as a metaphor for our daily round - but now it is driven by *a desire to just do one's work for its own sake and not for any purpose fulfilled beyond it.* This transmutation of the given releases "a new substance in his veins". Taylor's analysis then zooms in to a microcosmic world of an insect he has seen in a New Zealand cave, "an ugly worm" that eats insects it traps in its sticky thread for months. "Then finally the larva transforms itself to a tiny winged adult that lacks even mouth parts to feed and lives only a day or two. These adults as soon as they have mated and laid eggs, are themselves caught in the threads and are devoured by the cannibalist worms - - the only point of their existence now fulfilled - - - The same meaningless cycle may continue for another millions of years". Taylor then scans to overview of the life condition. "All living things present essentially the same spectacle - - ceaseless effort, repeating itself - - accomplishing nothing, getting nowhere - - no point to it at all." So what can be the *meaning* of life? Taylor answers from the non-positional space of philosophical reflection – that which Aristotle counts as reason and man's highest

calling - but with a twist that Aristotelian teleological purposefulness would reject. “The point of any living thing’s life is, evidently, nothing but life itself”. This is “the very life of the world”.

For human beings, this means, more exactly (tense and voice changes added), what matters is “our own wills, our deep interest in what we find ourselves doing - - [it is] *the building, not what is finally built* that gives our lives their meaning”. This is, Taylor concludes, life’s “whole justification and meaning”. For humanity, “what counts is that one should be able to begin a new task, a new castle, a new bubble. It counts only because it is there to be done, and one has a will to do it - - The meaning of life is from within us, it is not bestowed from without, and it far exceeds in both its beauty and permanence any heaven of which men have ever dreamed or yearned for”. Human identity, in short, is self-made and can be whatever is one’s compelling life interest. Life-value onto-axiology again agrees and applauds - but *only* up to the point of understanding the power of human motive’s form in deciding how to live. While Taylor’s Nietzschean turn of Aristotelian *telos* is a revealing combination of classical and existentialist concepts, it is without a moral core. What is lacking is any society-wide dimension of life-value understanding and, more basically, any principled value ground to rule out the a-moral acquisitive drive of the lying murderer Sisyphus, or the enslaved relations among humans approved by Nietzsche and Aristotle. Once more philosophy reaches a double impasse of life-blindness - disconnection from the common life-ground, and rationality without life-coherence principle.

Yet at least a sustaining internal purpose of some kind is recognized here, as distinguished from merely external market pleasures. No human identity or meaning of life is adequate without this interior purpose. Where life-value philosophy disagrees, however, is with the lack of any deeper value foundations to ground this doing as one wills with full givenness to it. A purpose which is self-decided and unbreakable seems noble until reflection asks how pure self-centeredness can be recognized as a problem from this moral vantage point, or even serial rape and pillage in a career of world conquest. If there are no life-coherent standards to guide the commanding interest, any life despoiling project can be said to be ‘living in the way that it is his will to be living’. This is not a problem that Richard Taylor engages, nor Friedrich Nietzsche who influences him. Why can’t Genghis Khan or the global financial looters of today be said to be living wholly in the manner that it is their aim and will to be living? Life-value analysis finds that even in this philosopher’s stirring affirmation of one’s commitment as of ultimate value in the living of it, the wider social and ecological fields within which one lives are blinkered out. We may see here the invisible circle around the individualist will-to-be in itself. Social and natural planetary life-hosts do not enter the philosophical radar even as they collapse outside the circles of self affirmation.

13.5. The Social Order and the Meaning of Life

F.H. Bradley (1896-1924) is the last great Anglo-American philosopher since John Stuart Mill to ground in historical society itself, but he does so as an idealist in the tradition of Hegel. His most famous work, *Ethical Studies* (1876), provides the logic of his position which is as immersed in human social context as the foregoing philosophers are decoupled from it. A great turn away from social relations has occurred in

philosophy as well as economic theory over a century, as prior sections have explained. Bradley, in contrast, as the contemporary “communitarian” school of which he is a forerunner, understands the individual as embedded in the social relationships of an historical society. The now dominant idea of the individual as an autonomous and freely self-maximizing atom relating to others by contractual agreement has arisen to his attention, and he dismisses it as without unifying purpose or substance. It is, he argues, confined to a world of “perishing selves”. The deeper social substance of the individual human which Bradley argues for “contains social relations within himself as belonging to his very being”, and his “real self - - implies in its every fiber these relations of community”. The community which the individual lives in and through – “apart from which the self is a pure abstraction” – constitutes his “real being”, and so human identity and meaning of life are to be found here. Bradley’s central chapter “My Station and Its Duties” in particular spells out this position: “What one has to do depends on what his place is, what his function is, and all that comes from his station in the social organism”. Society is the “whole life” in which the individual participates, and a man’s way to live is decided by his “social station and its duties”.

It is worth briefly situating Bradley’s thought within the philosophical tradition. He stands for a mode of thought whose essential character of “organic society” and the individual as “an organic function” of that society stems from Plato’s *Republic*, through Hegel’s philosophy of society and history, past its fascist perversion as despotic absolutism, to today’s school of democratic communitarianism which features such thinkers as Charles Taylor and Michael Sandel. Life-value philosophy can substantively agree with this holistic understanding of the individual as a living function of society, not a self-maximizing atom in a liberal void or a price-competing function of the world market. Yet at the same time, there is a confinement of this social-relational philosophy which Bradley exposes more directly than we will find in communitarian philosophers today. He says in his chapter “My Station and its Duties” that we “should identify others and ourselves with the station we fill” and that “a man who does his work in the world is good - - if his private faults do not prevent him from fulfilling his station”. One’s education and habituation is properly “growing into one with the good self around me” to become by his fulfillment of station “one with the moral whole” of one’s society as an organ of it in “self-consciousness of it in and through him” .

13.5.1. To Serve Society So Far as It Serves the Life Capacities of its Individual Members

We can immediately discern that this understanding of human identity and one’s meaning of life is very different from Tolstoy’s, Nagel’s, Camus’ or Richard Taylor’s in its complete onto-ethical orientation to the wider moral community of one’s society. The lone individual dissolves into his social station. Life-value onto-axiology can agree with this philosophy’s prioritization of the wider life host – but *only so far as* the social order in question is structured to provide the universal human life goods required to enable the individual capacities of its members. As explained in Section 10, society’s organization by rights and duties ought to enable each and all’s human being and individuated becoming so far as is consistent with its material resources to do so - the *process* of social justice through generational time. Life-value onto-ethics thus provides an impartial life-grounded standpoint from which to evaluate and work for change in

one's society rather than merely fulfill its given stations and duties. On the other hand, no such non-positional life-grounded understanding figures in existing communitarian conceptions of society's organic nature and its citizens' rights and duties. The community is assumed as given, and there is no evident principled ground from which it is understood to be changeable for the better. There is admission of this possibility, but no life-value standard to decide or adjudicate the process or even to understand what might be objectively wrong with society's stations and duties as they are. This of course leaves room for self-deception and unknowing collaboration with what constitutes in fact a life-blind social order – as, for example, in an inherited caste or class-ridden system.

At the simplest level, Bradley's complete exclusion of any "*she*" or any place for the rebel in his social-organic vision shows how *human* being can be reduced in a communitarian scheme. Being *only* one with one's society and one's place in it leaves no place for going beyond it, the ferment of *its* advance by individuality of vocation and contesting of traditional roles. The society might be patriarchal or male-dominated, as one could argue Bradley's own society was, as well as racist and imperialist in structure, as it was, so that one's station and duties *require* one's living by and standing for this system as one's "moral whole". With no onto-ethical resource or principled ground to recognize the deep-structural problem, it is reproduced by one's own station and duties within it. Now a Bradley scholar might reply– to quote Professor Timothy Sprigge in the *Oxford Companion of Philosophy* – that Bradley himself recognized "a society might be rotten with a morality to be transcended". Yet this reassurance does not remotely meet the problem. How can one even recognize the life-corrupting ordering of 'this organic moral whole' if one has grown into it and it into him, as Bradley so eloquently explains? What resource of higher-order principle is available in this way of thinking so one *can* detect its life-blind rules beneath one's moral conditioning by them? It is all very well for a philosopher and his school to admit such a problem could exist, but without any principled way of discerning it, there can be no value ground from which to move beyond it. Here most of all an objective standard of life-value is required to get beyond acculturation of one's life to be an organic function of an inherited social system which may be caste or class ridden and totem bound. The truth is that there is no such resource provided by communitarian philosophy as it is so far developed. While life-value standards in this or that respect have long implicitly advanced in actual societies in stitches of meaning won in historical fact – what this study has as civil commons advance – this principled ground of good community is absent. Neither Bradley nor communitarian theory today provide ultimate life-value standards any more than liberal atomism does – the missing onto-ethical base across schools.

13.5.2. Foucault on the Social Order in Postmodern Reaction

Michel Foucault (1926-84) understands social order in an approximately opposite way to received communitarianism. He has lived through Nazism, the occupation of France, the Communist Party, and being gay. He is a philosophical historian of science and its *panopticon*, and he spells out the inner logic of modern knowledge power across domains of prisons, asylums, sexuality and – behind all – modes of scientific rationality. As with postmodernism in all its forms, Foucault proposes no truer form of rationality,

and – in company with what unites the postmodern schools - repudiates organizing universal principles. Unlike other postmodernists, however, Foucault does not decouple from the ruling social order in preoccupation with signs in elaborated freedom from any referent, as Derrida and others do. Rather he peers into the interstitial orderings of oppression in society which even Marxian class analysis ignores. In company with other postmoderns he sees only different, contingent and arbitrary ordering structures calling themselves “rational”: which in his particular genealogical approach are shown to be, in decoded historical fact, instituted mechanisms in which human bodies are imprinted in life-mutilating ways. This is not a generic characteristic Foucault formulates as such, however. The concept of ‘human life’ does not exist in his work, but rather only subjugated bodies. So although what Foucault describes is life deforming, he avoids any normative ground to reject it. Some for that reason perceive a sado-masochistic streak in his analysis.

While most known contemporary philosophies avoid structures of social power as a taboo zone, Foucault sees nothing that is *not* “enmeshed in social structures of power”. Indeed he asserts that knowledge itself is a will to power codified in regimes of power and oppression. “The history which bears and determines us”, he famously says in *Power/Knowledge*, “has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning”. Claims of truth, science and knowledge are the circulating medium of this war forming the “disciplinary grids of society”. Foucault rightly discerns academic evasion of these patterns of social power. They are “reduced to a Hegelian skeleton”, or “the calm Platonic form of a dialogue”, or “the frightened repetition of the already said”. While Foucault recognizes the reduction of people to creatures by instituted powers of definition, discipline and panoptic surveillance, he does not formulate or even imply any resolution. The only common thread of his mordantly clinical archeology is that “the disciplines provide at the base a guarantee of the submission of forces and bodies” with many-layered mechanisms of scientific control “constituting the technique, universally widespread, of coercion”. “Let us say”, he says in the closest he gets to universal meaning - that of the capitalist social order - “that discipline is the unitary technique by which the body is reduced as political force at the least cost, and maximized as a useful force”. “Two processes - the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital” proceed simultaneously by “the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them”. What is new for Foucault is that capitalism perfects a more “subtle calculated technology of subjection” than the spectacle violence of the prior medieval and ancient epochs. Yet Foucault does not therefore oppose capitalism, as many wrongly infer. Rather, as he writes in his distinguished *Lectures at the College de France* (1975-76), there is no alternative. A “*permanent rule*”, he says (emphasis added), “a fundamental and permanent irrationality, a crude and naked irrationality of - - elementary brutality” is built into the human condition. There is, it follows, no release possible. In large part, this is Foucault’s inheritance from his philosophical inspiration Friedrich Nietzsche, whose “will to power” becomes in the age of the scientific order Foucault recognizes a “will to knowledge-power” – the onto-epistemic code of Foucault’s philosophy beyond Nietzsche. It expresses the demoralization of an epoch, particularly revealing within the work of one who is uniquely aroused to witness of the unseen mechanisms of human oppression. Yet no value of life itself is raised by Foucault, nor any moral responsibility, nor any regulatory system to protect and enable life against the

remorselessly ruling mechanism. All is on the side of detailing the systematic impositions on helpless bodies within which the idea of a human vocation, or social rules to enable human life capacities, or – inconceivable to this critique – civil commons infrastructures inherited and passed on through society’s reproduction, do not exist.

Rationalizing comprehension of the traditionally ruling order (Bradley and communitarianism) and shattering problemization of it (Foucault and postmodernism) thus share a common life blindness to humanity’s deeper identity and collective meaning. While Bradley and communitarian idealism claim the motivation for a higher self and being *within* the given social order, Foucault and postmodernism rule out the very notion of a higher self as an illusion. In the words of Irving Goffman, who belongs to neither school but represents the prevailing cosmopolitan cynicism in theory, “the self is but the peg on which something of a collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time”. We may observe here a great rupture of thought towards two poles. It may appear that the cosmopolitan negative is in the ascendancy, but most living within Hindu, Confucian and Islamic societies today comprehend the self in terms of society’s social stations and their duties, whether called “Dharma”, “the Five Relations”, or “Allah’s will”. An undistorted rationality of social ordering in which *life-coherent standards* rule remains unconceived at both poles.

13.6. Man’s Search For Meaning as the Ultimate Need of Humanity

Auschwitz victim Viktor Frankl takes the search for human identity and meaning to a deeper level. As a Jewish doctor seized by the Nazi machine in 1942 which, unbeknownst to him, also seizes and murders his beloved wife, this core of love most deeply sustains him in the camps along with his religion. With thousands of others, he is processed as a number and body to be used as long as useful before being gassed by the Nazi state and the companies paying pfennigs a day for labor until death. While behind the scenes, all has been conceived as scientific natural selection, this is a concept and connection that Dr. Frankl overlooks. A stamped number on the arm is one’s identity, slave labor is one’s system meaning, and injustice with every kick – “much worse than the pain”- is one’s lot. Underlying every deprivation which grinds the prisoners’ lives into an eerie combination of absolute abjection and competitive struggle to survive, life-value analysis recognizes all the universal human life goods that are deprived as the inner logic of the ruling system. This underlying meaning – the precise reversal of life value onto-ethics - is worth cataloguing because it provides the archetype of evil social system found in lesser degree in industrial hells of today – bread and gruel in starvation amounts, no fit clothing or sanitary waste disposal, strict prohibition of personal utensils, little shelter from the elements, sleeping conditions without room, footwear remnants falling apart in the snow, massive barbed-wire walls and watch-towers surrounding life in place of an environment, no security of person, liberty, rights, work safety or health care, deprivation of all cultural tools (including at the start Frankl’s life work manuscript), and – most central to the concentration-camp meaning – no human vocation possible except one: “*to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances - - this inner freedom which cannot be taken away – that makes life meaningful and purposeful*”(pp. 104-6, emphasis added).

13.6.1. The Inner Freedom that Cannot Be Taken Away

What can the innermost core of humanity *be* when all the necessary life means of choosing anything human have been deprived? What choice of human identity can exist in a situation of total powerlessness of condition? In Frankl's answer to these questions lies the existential essence of his onto-ethical study as a medical psychotherapist, and of his conclusion as one who has lived through the defining dehumanization of modern history. While Frankl has not a philosopher's concern for underlying generic principle and meaning – indeed he self-confutingly says it is “impossible to define the meaning of life in a general way - he indirectly provides an answer which allows for the higher order generalization which his intuitive existentialist commitment resists. “What was really needed”, he concludes of his fellow prisoners across differences, “was a fundamental change in our attitude towards life” : “ that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather *what life expected from us*. - - Our answer must be - - *to fulfil the tasks which life constantly sets for each individual*. These tasks, and therefore the meaning of life - - ” and here the explanation italicized above begins to wander again. Yet if we examine all the cases of his work in which he finds a stand taken against rather than for dehumanization, we may infer that which in principle always decides “the tasks which life constantly sets for each individual”. They all form some kind of “*self transcendence*”, and here we see a clear overlap of life-value understanding and Frankl's existentialist psychotherapy. His underlying meaning throughout his account may be unpacked into four generic principles: (1) care for another's life needing it (2) at one's cost or risk of human life good for oneself against (3) all competing against one another for (4) the few life goods available. On the other hand, the opposite meaning of life is exemplified by the ‘capos’ who were prisoners given human privileges for assistance in brutalization and deprivation of their fellows, sometimes more sadistically violent than the guards themselves – again in revealing correspondence to compradors today.

The choice of “self-transcendence” includes in particular for Frankl confronting the extreme suffering all are experiencing as transfiguring calls to *never be broken by the dehumanization to sustain a more human life for all*. This is a common thread of the meaning of life he finds in Auschwitz – to be “brave, dignified and unselfish” in the face of any brutalization including one's own death so as to uplift others in the face of any evil. Frankl's motto of self-transcendence is “*doing for another*” – with the ultimate other for him being God. God is mentioned only sparingly and without explanation, but is featured in the final words of both his concentration-camp account and his theoretical discussion adapted from 14 volumes in German. His experience of the living presence of his wife in a vision draws from him the claim that the “final wisdom and truth” is that “love is ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire”. Yet in all cases he reports, self-transcendence towards the other is the meaning of life he concretely bears – in one's helpful deed, in one's communicative care, in one's work, in one's standing up to suffering. Yet far from concentration camp eliminating “the opportunities to fulfill the tasks which life constantly sets”, it provides for Frankl the realization that “he has nothing to lose but his so ridiculously naked life”, and this always means, again, commitment beyond self to act for the other. After Auschwitz, Frankl forms the Third Viennese School of “logotherapy” – healing by recognizing one's own meaning of life,

which in his view is always individual to the self. In his peacetime life after 1945, he revealingly sees a new kind of emptiness and despair in what we might call the post-war industrial growth machine.

13.6.2. Humanity's Identity and Meaning of Life Require Deeper System Comprehension

Life-grounded onto-ethics finds in Frankl's witness an incontestable crucible of understanding the human identity and vocation in even conditions that seem to make it impossible. In terms of life-value philosophy, doing what is of interest to oneself and life value to others is the other way round. It is doing what is of life value for others as of ultimate life interest to self. It is the meaning of survival as a human being. Life-value analysis might therefore propose a distinction between conditions of life emergency and normality in which ultimate life necessity is not always calling for a life-saving action – a normality which enables one to pursue what is of interest in itself, such as Frankl working on his own life manuscript which the death-camp situation prevented him from doing (although his tiny rucksack for escape included scraps of written paper he had hidden away). Yet this distinction may not ultimately work because there is life-and-death need in some sense in *all* that is worthwhile doing – the need of the child for love and learning, the job for society which must be done for its life goods to be provided, the creative work of art for all, is there an objective principle whereby we can draw such a line? As explained from Section 3.14 on, the measure of life need draws the line, that without which life capacity is reduced or lost: the more life capacity lost the greater the need to be met. Here also the rules by which we live must be taken into account. The rule-system of the concentration camp was an utmost evil to stand against because its rules inhumanly deprived all of the prisoners of all of their life necessities to steep incapacitation, disease and death. Any life-coherent conception of human identity and meaning grounds in life-value lines, and where the stands must be made one can best make are the value compass of one's highest life meaning.

While Frankl does resonantly refer once to “the wider cycles of life and death, of suffering and dying” as the wider concern of logotherapy, in fact this level of conception is in tension with his agent-relative framework of existential individualism. Like virtually all philosophies of our era, the missing moral base that life-value onto-axiology provides is the natural and social life support systems that one's actions contribute to or derogate from. From this impartially life-grounded standpoint, one can discern that the contemporary world itself has become a kind of concentration camp for the poor majority where human life goods are being systematically degraded or deprived over time by a reigning money-rule system which is indifferent to natural and human life requirements. We may recall from Frankl's account that all human life in the Auschwitz system was reduced to system numbers – and what he does not mention - that the organizing number system came from a global U.S. information-machine corporation. Moreover, there was an analogous philosophy of rule in terms of which human life is understood as governed in the macrocosm by inexorable laws of competition for survival, with mass death, life destitution and fear following from this ‘new world order’. We may recall John D. Rockefeller on the systematic destitution which follows from this system: “The disparity in income between the rich and the poor is merely the survival of the fittest - - - the working out of a law of nature and a law of

God". While pervasive mass propaganda machines now claim the opposite, evolved civil commons of mutual life support systems are stripped from the victims to ensure that "non-competitive" deviations are eliminated - as Sections 11.6 and 11.11 explain. Even the supreme crime under international law of belligerent armed invasion of other societies has been glorified again, while resisters are classified as "terrorists". The reduction of superpower citizens to angry mobs bound by the "negative solidarity of atomized masses" - Hannah Arendt's telling descriptor of a totalitarian society - emerges one more. In such a situation, the need "to fulfill the tasks which life constantly sets" becomes imperative. Yet an agent-relative ethic cannot orient at this deep-structural level any more than the atomic aggregates of contemporary economics can. This is the great shortfall of Viktor Frankl's logos of life-value recovery. As his repeated observation that "only a few people are capable of reaching such a high moral standard of inner liberty" discloses, this philosophy and meaning of life is inadequate to the onto-ethical crisis the world faces today.

13.7. Personal Identity in Philosophy: The A-Priori Retreat from Life Substance

In dominant analytic philosophy, the concept of "human identity" does not arise and the meaning of life - a long paramount concern of philosophy - is rarely discussed. Philosophy too has become a technical discipline. We may recall here Bertrand Russell's disquiet about contemporary philosophy's abandonment of understanding the world itself, that grave and important task which philosophy throughout has hitherto pursued". The meaning of personal identity itself has suffered this fate. In published analytic philosophy, a personal identity means only a *numerical* identity. Reduction of human life to an empty equation has thus spread into the innermost circles of metaphysics. The issue of why a human being is more than the rationally maximizing calculator presupposed elsewhere is thus excised. Consequently, all the interesting questions about personal identity disappear. For example, that persons alone relate to other persons in a way they do not relate to stones or livestock goes unconsidered. That persons alone of all creatures can reflect on their behavior as an object of consciousness and seek a meaning to their lives - this too disappears. Once the reduction of personal identity to numerical identity is set as the framework of philosophical understanding, life substance is a-priori erased. Hence too, the moral dynamic of personal identity to choose to be better or worse persons disappears.

To quote an authoritative professional dictionary entry with emphasis added: "The word identity means identical, and means nothing different in judgments about persons than about other things". The favourite candidate has survived since John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* in which the equation of one = one is justified by saying that the one who remembers doing the deed and the one who has done it are one and the same. This is called "the memory criterion of personal identity", and it arises from legal ascription of blame and imposition of punishment. Here again philosophy takes for granted what the reigning system of power prescribes. The action of the accused is therefore presupposed as solely responsible although countless other conditions are causally involved - including the rules of society which repeatedly generate the crimes, often with no victims. Hence if no loss-of-memory claim can hold against this identity of numerical sameness, then that is an end to the issue of responsibility. Although much has been written in philosophy in defense of the memory criterion of personal identity,

none of it observes that it avoids substantive life issues at every level. Thus even after questions have been posed of the a-priori and conformist emptiness of life content it assumes, the premise continues to be repeated. Even the credo of the dominant linguistic philosophy, that meaning is established by usage, is screened out with no notice. Thus when the issue of personal identity becomes really interesting in normal language terms – as when a person is said to be “seeking her own personal identity”, or “losing his personal identity” or “regaining a sense of identity” – these deep clues about its rich and repressed meaning go unexamined in the literature. Yet we cannot begin to explain personal identity by slicing out in real life, and assuming life choice has nothing to do with it. When personal identity is so reduced, a kind of conceptual homicide has occurred with no reflection on the operation. With no argument for the disappearing of what a personal identity in fact *is*, and no notice of the expunction, we face not only a core example of what Russell meant about ‘philosophy’s abandonment of the world’, but the adoption of a mindless first premise of meaning with no warrant of justification. Unjustified assumptions are what philosophy is meant to rule out, not to validate and enforce by prescription. So we have a breakdown of reason at the same time as life substance is barred from discussion. This combination of operations is not novel in philosophy or social science. It conforms to the ruling value syntax which reduces persons to non-persons a-priori. Such can be the hold of a ruling order on the mind. The values and goals that structure human life are bracketed out. Again we see that what it does not fit the regulating frame of comprehension does not exist.

13.7.1. How Erasure of Personal Identity Is Sustained Until Reversed in Principle

When a person is reduced to a single non-branching continuous series of stages of *the same*, only the redundant can be seen. This is the unsuspected system function of philosophy’s personal identity literature, and of formal philosophy and economics in general. It helps to explain their incapacity to respond to even ecogenocide and planetary life-system collapse in the surrounding world – an unsuspected system function within professional reasoning itself. Analysis has observed this blinkering operation at different levels throughout this study. Because the operation occurs in advance of reflective thought, however, it is not noticed. How, one may ask, can such a central issue of first philosophy continue so locked in? On the immediate level, puzzles and exceptions predictably arise with such reduction of persons to what they are not, and their exploration within the given frame of reference keeps all pre-occupied within it. Once the issue becomes ensconced as a standard problem to publish on, everyone involved has an interest in sustaining the ruling presupposition. It is only when a specially intelligent philosopher within the literature like Derek Parfit challenges why sameness through time is *important* or of *value* to a reasonable person that it begins to unravel the master assumption towards obsolescence. Parfit’s success is revealing. He accepts the established premise, but proceeds with complex argumentation of a Buddhist quality to show that it becomes undone as a guide for persons. He does this most impressively in his summative work, *Reasons and Persons*. To compel a 543-page book of fine-grained analysis into two themal propositions, Parfit principally explains: (1) why a person can more happily see himself as *not* identical or even continuous through time, indeed be relieved by it (a Buddhist argument in fine analytic livery); and (2) why the self of self-interest which is so widely accepted and prescribed is impossibly problematic once the nature of this identical self on which self-interest

depends is critically exposed to unprejudiced examination (again reminiscent of the Buddhist *anatman* position). Perhaps the most influential upshot of this work is its demonstration that the standard identity of self-interest cannot in principle take into account the interests of future generations – as the state of the world confirms. Philosophy thus helps us to catch up to reality by showing what follows in principle, but has been ignored in fact.

One should not be misled into thinking, however, that once the personal-identity-as-sameness lock is opened that philosophy comes to engage a living version of personal identity. Life substance and ground are just as thoroughly excised by opposite established approaches. Consider, for example, the postmodern position that there is no life substance of personal identity at all but only “*language speaking selves*”. Although this understanding comes originally from Martin Heidegger, it is especially elaborated through Jacques Derrida and its meaning is variously expressed by postmodernists across schools. The space of the self or person is only positional within linguistic and sign discourses and can only be articulated through their circuits, a scene of intersections and operations in which the subject inexorably dissolves into functions of the discourse itself. The person becomes in effect a vanishing moment in chains of signification with proliferating and evanescent differences built into ever elaborating linguistic functions. Signs, agree the postmodernists, always point beyond themselves to still more signs in an endless movement of differing and deferral with no real object or ground of *what* is signified. There is “no center” and no personal identity. What any philosophy of personal identity claims in the way of unifying meaning and constancy, postmodernism argues, is undermined by polysemy (multiple meaning), alterity (otherness), and change.

Jeffery Noonan has argued effectively in *Critical Humanism and the Politics of Difference* that at the heart of the postmodern enterprise there is a contradiction between the denial of any real subject in principle, on the one hand, and the desire for liberation of the human subject from oppressive structures, on the other. While agreeing with this critique, life-value analysis points out the common exclusion across polar-opposite schools of any life-substantive human being at all, and the impact of this evacuation of life meaning on the world. The last recourse of human identity itself is surrendered to empty equation, linguistic function, and incapacity of life stand. Whatever the theory, personal identity in the life-grounded, choosing and value-standing sense dissolves into the functions of the macro mechanism.

13.8. Recovering the Choice and Meaning Space of Personal Identity

While expert consensus in the field of personal identity has not yet let go of the sameness reduction, few young philosophers still research the issue. Instead they are apt to go to cognitive science where life-value erasure still holds, only now with neuroscience as a basis of discussion. In the meantime, no-one has found the necessary and sufficient conditions of identical sameness for persons through time despite thought experiments of double lives, brain transplants, hemispheric fissions, and so on. Even when identical sameness is quietly softened to “psychological continuity”; and even when countless surrounding attempts are made to equate human being to an operationally redundant mechanism like a computer, the masked mystery of the eternal

soul cannot find a rational secular ground. Life-value analysis has already explained the “externalist fallacy” at work in these reductionist conceptions in Sections 7.6. and 7.7. We need not retrace that explanation here. What Hans Jonas called “the greatest usurpation in the history of human thought”, the erasure of the person’s very life experience, has not registered in analytic philosophy of mind. One way or another, the most basic human life substance is screened out by the ruling syntax of meaning. For example, no matter how advanced a chess-playing computer is, it does not have a felt side of being, and cannot identify with life beyond its own program - despite a culture of science fiction and philosophical conceits drawing a veil over the ultimate distinctions between human beings and robots. Nor can the most advanced computer turn itself on or change its prescribed modes of operation, and it cannot criticize what it is programmed to do. Yet the reigning models abstract out all these fundamental meanings of *being* a human life. Judging by the extent to which persons in the external world are reduced to programmed behaviors that do not identify with other life or think beyond their external prescriptions and reinforcers, as Dr. Frankl observed in his concentration camp, the reduction of human life identity has worked on the majority of its victims. Once people can be made identical with their programming in the aggregate, masses of rat-like consumption repertoires to sustain the ruling sequences in stable equilibrium seems to be a viable order. Yet no-one could life-coherently suppose that s/he can thereby understand the meaning of human persons.

13.8.1. Modes of Elimination: How the Person in Personal Identity Reductions is Erased

Still the ultimate ontological and epistemic distinctions remain blocked out. Whether personal identity is understood in terms of psychological or bodily sameness through time or reduced to external continuities, the *lost* issue is whether this “personal identity” relates to *what a person lives*. The fact is that real persons are unpredictable in the individual case as distinguished from the mass statistical pattern – a fact which is true even on the level of subatomic particles. Yet this general fact is effectively ignored, and the choice space for the person deciding who they are *against* any fixed sameness through time is expunged. The entire life dynamic is blinkered out. Thus the person *can* be reduced to a predictable a creature of habit, conceive itself as no more than a name identity, be conditioned into a role with no remainder, be dissolved into code elaborators of language, and so on with none resisting the annihilation of human life and the person into mechanical paths and circuits. One still alive to the world, however, can recognize the difference as clearly as the next breath in or sight of the sky, and commitment to protect them – none of which cognitive science or evolutionary genetics can compute. In short, personal identity is *a construction mediated by elective possibilities of opening change throughout*. The standard criteria and models cannot in principle understand this ultimate onto-ethical life space and meaning. All of the accounts – psychological, linguistic, behaviorist, role-bound, genetic – may offer an important glimpse of what to take into account in understanding the limiting conditions of personal identity formation and meaning. But all obstruct understanding of its elective form and will to “stand for what one really is” – the construction of personal identity that is made, not given. This explains what we mean when we say “he is a changed person”, on the one hand, or “his sense of identity as person remains unshakeable”, on the other.

The police identity of the same person or its DNA corroboration cannot possibly work as an explanation here – although the latter is strangely avoided by personal identity theory as a foolproof equation of sameness through time, perhaps because it spoils a long philosophical game. All are in any case helpless as ways of understanding the defining nature of a person and the identity s/he forges, sustains or loses, transforms, makes or surrenders. At the opposite pole of understanding, decentered linguistic meaning can find no traction of personal identity either because the subject becomes its changing position within a discourse’s elaborating sequences; or, prior to postmodern grammatology, the “I” is a purely empty “transcendental unity of apperception” (Kant) or a “non-referring term” (Wittgenstein). In the most interesting reduction perhaps, the person is understood as only a *role occupation to elicit favorable reaction on the social stage* - as Irving Goffman spells it out in his classic, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. This latter dramaturgical model may capture the oldest idea of a personal identity still applicable today – an identifying mask through which a person speaks (literally, *per-sona*). Yet it still does not get behind the mask to the person herself. The person is only the “enactment of rights and duties attached to a given status”. Here the person or self is again expunged by an external function taking its place, and finally conceived as no more than a ‘peg on which a collaborative manufacture is held for a time’. Like the other reductions, its account tells us little about personal identity except how it is eliminated.

13.8.2. Personal Identity as Choice Structure or the Soul’s Form

Let us get our bearings towards a more adequate conception of the substance of personal identity from a traditional definition of identity meaning in general, Aristotle’s enduring criterion for identity – applicable to anything at all - is *that in virtue of which elements forms a unity*. For example, a *table*, any table at all anywhere and at any time, is a table in virtue of all its elements forming a single unity of meaning: an elevated flat surface on which things can be laid. However diverse and different the elements are within the table, or from one table to another, this is the unifying identity of a table through time and space. Try this exercise of finding the unifying form in any familiar object, and one discovers how exacting the analysis required even in such simple cases. Wittgensteinians claim, indeed, that it is impossible to find such unifying criteria. Yet their sweeping proscription relies on selected cases like “game” and images like the strands of a rope, with no refutation of cases like a table.

As we have seen in *The Global Crisis of Values*, there has been a contemporary tide away from unity of meaning in philosophy. Nonetheless Aristotle’s standard criterion of any word or entity remains standing on both sides of this fashion. With his rendering of Plato’s eternal Forms into immanently governing forms of this-worldly entities, he pioneers the definitions of empirical science. Yet Aristotle’s criterion offers little help in understanding a *person’s* identity because, unlike natural objects, a human individual *can unpredictably change its form* over time. There is no a-priori limit on this change or holding of form, both life enabling and destructive, connective and reductive. For example, one’s personal identity in a concentration camp victim could be externally annihilated by attacking and destroying all life security, protections and expressions of the person, as we have seen Frankl explain in Section 13.6. Hannah Arendt emphasizes in her classic, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, how the “juridical identity” of the person

is erased both within the concentration camp and the wider society – no human rights to anything, or from any violation. Life-value analysis agrees that a person’s identity can be destroyed. Yet it also observes that some people like Frankl can also choose to stand up to the life-eliminating system. Their identity can become deeper and more connected. As Frankl quotes Nietzsche, “What does not kill me makes me stronger”. Observe the implicit choice structure of personal identity throughout. It is not a physical given, and it is not a constant. It can be attacked and even annihilated – although it can also stand and grow stronger in the face of any threat. Personal identity is a normative structure, found or lost or developed, subject to the choices and contingency to which all normative structures are exposed, in particular at the individual level. This is why we can say about the traditional ideal of personal identity, the soul of a person, that “he has lost his soul”, or “regained it”, or whatever fits the individual case and life process.

Is personal identity so very contingent? It depends on the person and the identity s/he has formed. For some like Frankl, personal identity was not destructible because he identified with what is deeper and wider than the animal self, as he explains. This was Frankl’s meaning of life in a form specific to him, as personal identity always is.+ As such, personal identity becomes an implicit meaning of life for each individual as individual, that which unifies the other dimensions of the person such as work, projects, family and leisure. This unifying identity of a person can also “come apart” or be torn by terrible conflict between expected duties, the tragedy of Sophocles’ *Antigone* and Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. The person’s choice structure or identity can be evil as well as benevolent in what it stands for. A strong personal identity can identify beyond and withstand onslaughts on its body in life-destructive forms too. We need to understand that a personal identity is an open onto-ethical possibility, and admits of diabolical as well as saintly forms of value system, as well as conformist copping out – “no soul at all”. The distinction between good and evil in personal identity as in all else is told by life-value standard, as the analysis of the prior 12 Chapters has explained. The personal identity of Socrates, for example, was to tell knowledge from falsehood by questioning received opinions, the way of enabling human consciousness he was willing to die for. On the other hand, the personal identity of Adolph Hitler was configured in an opposite direction, to be the Fuhrer of the German Reich in a triumphant armed-force rule of the world, something he committed suicide over when he knew he had failed. Each identified far wider than an animal identity with immediate body and activity. Yet they constructed opposite personal identities through their lives – one living by impartial reason, the other by a fascist fanaticism. Their surrounding social and environmental conditions determined each up to a point, but they turned out very different from other persons within much the same fields of determination. Determination by factors over which individuals have no choice or control sets limits to the range of material possibility of those living within them, no doubt, and this delimited range of material possibility includes genetic inheritance. But nonetheless these limits of material possibility leave room for different directions of personal choice and decision - as the vast diversity of personal identities show within much the same limiting conditions. This is not to deny that ruling systems can close down life-choice possibilities, as the concentration camp demonstrates. Yet even here we have seen how personal choices of how to live and find life meaning ended in opposite identities within *exactly the same closed conditions*. Even when these delimiting conditions afforded apparently no choice space, the ranges of material possibility still admitted momentous

personal decisions between being human or inhuman, reasonable or vilely power-seeking.

The personal identity one is and stands for can make a life and death difference. Yet personal identity continues to be understood as given by properties of the human organism or induced by an external system. The ‘warrior’ sacrifices for honor *within* the surrounding honor system. The poor man makes good within the existing wealth-acquisition system. Today’s ‘rational man’ maximizes what he can have within the game. Thus the question eventually arises, how can we explain why one’s life itself can be sacrificed to death on behalf of emphasis added sustaining one’s identity and values *in the face of* animal wants and social norms? This is the ultimate elective space of human identity. It has often been lived, but not philosophically decoded. Socrates exemplifies a personal identity which has chosen against what others choose from within the same natural world, genotype, and historical society: “I did not care for things that most people care about – making money, having a comfortable home, high military or civil rank, and all the other activities, political appointments, secret societies, party organizations, which go on in our city”, Socrates says in the *Apology* (36b). Neither social environment nor genes determined his identity. Yet Socrates still grounds in the laws of his society to do what he does as a choice of his onto-ethical identity. If he does not willingly allow the sentence of death to be executed on his life, he understands himself to be in violation of *who he really is*: “I must obey the law”, he says (*Apology*, 19a), or become “a destroyer of law and order” (*Crito*, 53 b). Life-value analysis, in contrast, avoids this fallacious inference and asks how persons can think beyond their surrounding law and order which may be destructively life blind in its present form, and require changing to a more life-coherent order. It opens inquiry to forms of human identity and life meaning which have been system repressed and philosophically unexamined. It is to this underlying life consciousness that explanation now turns.

13.9. Human Consciousness, Identity and the Meaning of Life: Re-Setting Consciousness to a Higher Order in an Age of Collapse

Humanity has higher-order capacities of consciousness which have been systematically blocked out. As prior sections have explained, there have been two main levels of reduction and elimination. Scientific, economic, technological and philosophical rationality have led the way in mechanical comprehension and meta-programming; while the mass media have occupied humanity’s popular thinking and feeling sides of being with stereotype images and ideas to sell commodities and engineer consent. The dominant tendency of the ruling metaphysics today has been to *abstract out life consciousness itself* by formal, logical, and bio-computer models. Thus just as personal identity has been theorized to screen out its very nature in claiming to explain it, so too has human consciousness been stripped of its distinguishing characteristics which are most needed to meet the contemporary planetary crisis. Life-value explanation has corrected the life-blind operators at the logical and scientific levels with the required principles of validity, as spelled out in Chapter Reclaiming Rationality And Scientific Method::The Life-Coherence Principle As Global System Imperative. Yet life-grounded consciousness has been driven into cultural hiding at a still more general cultural level so that even when “the life-world” is explicitly asserted in normative theory it still

excludes reference to life means and coordinates (as shown in Section 8.13). The thought and felt fields of human life have, in short, been so stripped by externalist and lifeless conceptions that the felt side of human being has been locked into stereotypes and the unconscious; while life value and connection have been so hollowed out that the mind cannot now be clearly distinguished from the calculation sequences of a Turing machine.

We will not retrace these explanations here. Rather higher life capacities of human consciousness will be demonstrated as self-evident beneath system repression. In each case, this life capacity of human consciousness can be individually verified by *the first-person test* - thought experiment which penetrates beneath the standard external-observer position to disclose capacities of consciousness which are implicitly denied by professional theories and normalized 'going through the motions'. The first-person test is distinguished from phenomenological method by demonstration of an ultimate consciousness capacity beneath 'intentionality' or objects *of* it. Of more momentous significance, analysis shows that these normally lost or capacities of human consciousness are far from 'otherworldly' or 'ineffable'. They form a bridge from underlying human life capacity to emancipation of the species from its ruling value syntax. The issue of how this occurs on institutional levels has been spelled out step by step in the last three sections. Here the deeper-lying issue is the releasing of consciousness itself to comprehend the higher meaning of human identity and its vocation.

13.9.1. The Infinite Within and Without

Human consciousness is infinite not only because, as seers have testified from across cultures, it can be filled with a 'white light radiance' beyond any sky. This capacity of human consciousness will be explained in *Spiritual Philosophies: World Visions of Universal Identity*. Here analysis focuses on the secular and demonstrable 'infinite within' by showing its directly experiencable nature. It is self-evidently infinite because there is no boundary or limit to its extension or to its modes. For whatever form or limit exists in consciousness or the outer universe can be thought beyond - for example, one can think to centuries after one's own death or beyond the most distant galaxy posited by science. Whether what we think is true or not is another matter. The human life capacity of consciousness beyond any limit to it is the claim, and first-person testing can confirm this infinite consciousness space. In logical terms, there is nothing that can be thought which cannot be negated - the inner truth to dialectical thought. Yet we need not dwell on what can become an elaborating scholastic system to see the inner logic of 'the infinite within' at work.

Explanation is better grounded in directly life-relevant illustrations. Try for example *not* to think of what is forbidden (a moral limit) or to stay within perimeters of formal deduction (logical or mathematical limit). Both forms of regulating limit to consciousness are possible and often realized, but only if imposed by rules within which one or one's peers decide to stay against the power of thought to move outside of it. Such drawing of lines around human consciousness does not show a limit to consciousness as such, but only that it can be harnessed within rules. This inherent but unobservable boundlessness of human thought is, however, seldom recognized as the

internal human capacity that it demonstrably is.

Rather it has been attributed to God or magic powers (if judged good), demons or the id (if not) or, in the academy today, simply abstracted out of discussion. What is missed is the infinite nature of human consciousness itself, the invisible ground within.

13.9.1.1. Progressive Infinite Consciousness and Its System Chains

As the interconnected ecologies of the bio-region, the continent, the world, the atmosphere and the stars become known, we can discern an underlying pattern. The ‘infinite within’ of human consciousness becomes progressively connected to the ‘infinite without’ of material and energy fields. No final limit exists to either, as the expanding outer universe discloses on the space-occupying side. The human mind can therefore be understood as an interior correlative of the spatial-temporal universe outside, with both in processes of infinite reach beyond the given. Yet while knowledge implicitly grows at the forefronts of research towards comprehensively coherent understanding of nature’s operations, the inner and outer infinite are not conceptualized in their progressively connected and more inclusive meaning. Humanity’s ruling system of mental divisions of labor, atomic self-maximization and private money sequences disconnect consciousness from these opening inner and outer universes in process - the unseen mind chains of our age. Heraclitus, on the other hand, affirmed the infinitude of human consciousness over 2500 years ago with no astronomical or ecological correlatives yet developed. “There is no limit to consciousness”, he recognized, “so deep and far in every direction does it extend”.

The now ruling definition of infinity has nevertheless remained within *infinitesimal division* - from Zeno’s paradoxes to the modern infinitesimal calculus to Cantor’s set theory to the marginal theory of market supply-demand curves. The meaning of infinite as horizonless reach and connection beyond any limit has been effectively lost in ever more minutial divisions - what may be called *the regressive infinite*. In social correlation to it, atomic market demands displace common life support systems in advancing privatization, while disaggregations of nature fracture ecological integrity at every level – both driven by the private money sequencing of competing corporate vehicles in predatory growth with no limit of divisive appropriation. These patterns have been tracked through this study from Section 1.14 on. Yet human consciousness has inherent shared capacities to be conscious *of* these patterns with no limiting bound to interconnective comprehension - *the progressive infinite* of consciousness required to meet these comings apart of the natural and human life-host. While connections among natural phenomena are already comprehended from subatomic force fields to the outer galaxies in expansion – the infinite within and without in ever more inclusive comprehension - the ruling forms of society go in the opposite direction. They regress into ever greater division, seriality and dissolution of common life interest and ground. Yet planet sustainability requires re-connective comprehension if terrestrial life body is not to go on being preconsciously money-sequenced into multiplying dead parts. More complexly, the infinite whole of life and life conditions is piece by piece dismantled, stripped and pulverized into industrial components, all in correspondence to the mind’s divisions into diminishing constituent functions of this underlying meta-program. The infinite within thus disappears into multiplying dissections, sequences and

subspecialties across disciplines and sciences, while the infinite without of planetary life and support systems corresponds in financial and technological restructurings so that almost nothing connects back to anything else in a life-coherent whole.

In prior analysis like Section 7.9, scientific philosophy's leadership of modern mechanism without life requirements entering into its conceptions has been mapped in organizing principle. Here human consciousness is connected back to its 'progressive infinite' ground, within and without. Where human consciousness has already relinked disconnected bits into life-coherent comprehension, it has made all the difference to human thought, action and planetary life. Without these interventions of intelligent connection, the earth would have been significantly destroyed in its life. Consider the long-unseen linkages between imperceptible man-made gases of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane and chlorofluorocarbon (commercial DDT and CFC's respectively) and their ecocidal consequences on planetary life and the earth's atmosphere: first, world-wide reproductive breakdowns in countless species by DDT-contaminated food chains and, second, continent-sized rents in the ozone layer of the terrestrial atmosphere protecting earth life against deadly solar radiation. Such connective consciousness is the meta-step of mind towards planetary recovery, but humanity's choice space has opposing directions of possibility – to open to reconnective meaning and system correction, or to close within the normalized chains of atomicity, division and collapse. There can be no reasonable denial of the resolving capacity of human consciousness. Who can claim the ecology of the biosphere cannot be pursued to more links in progressive integration without limit? Who not paid for denial cannot link despoiled world life conditions to the money-sequence drivers causing them? The problem is that these questions cannot be posed within the ruling syntax of conception.

13.9.2. Non-Positional Consciousness in the World

Non-positional consciousness is reflective space where one looks with impartial gaze on whatever is reflected upon, "the view from nowhere" as Thomas Nagel puts it. It can be asking from outside an activity while still inside it, "what am I doing here?" Or it can be thinking beyond your own funeral and successors. One way or the other, one detaches from one's position and situation, and reflects *on* it from without. The non-positional thought space is distinct from 'the infinite within' because it always has an object of consciousness *to* which it looks. It can be as radically non-positional as one chooses – seeing the world 'from without' without a name, a life, a human body itself. It can also multiply its perspectives to see from any vantage point confined to none, the 'god's-eye view' of human consciousness which can enter into any being in imagination. Consciousness released from any received location may find that, as Heraclitus again long ago said, "Nature's hath no fairer form than a pile of random sweepings": that is, its forms and significations express the entire world in concrete connections and meaning.

Non-positional consciousness may be rare in the world today, but is as old as philosophy. Plato's Myth of the Cave is one of many examples we have of non-positional consciousness leading philosophical understanding. Socrates tells of a dream or vision – a standard device - in which people are chained by their conditioning to see only shadows dancing on the cave wall (as explained in Section 2.16.4.1). John Rawls'

“veil of ignorance” is another use of the non-positional standpoint. No-one choosing the principles of justice knows what position s/he will have in the social contract to be formed from this “original position”. In Rawls’ schema, this non-positionality is meant to ensure the impartiality of the rules of justice which are chosen. The problem is that not only is there no self-place known from behind this ‘veil of ignorance’, but no common life support systems exist for the contractors either. Ignorance of the deeper common life interest is thus built in. The *ecology of justice* advanced by life-value ontology is therefore inconceivable within this framework of thought.

Despite such hollowed-out conceptions at the social level, readers will recognize non-positional consciousness in their own case by the first person test of ‘looking on my life from outside’. Yet even humanity’s higher capacity of consciousness at a personal level is systematically selected against in global market culture because one must compete for everything – for grades, for selection, for one’s job, in one’s job, for survival itself. This is the determining syntax of value of the system. In the ruling money-sequence form of competition, more exactly, one’s financial position decides one’s place with the reigning mechanism, and those at the top strategize every minute or even nanosecond to maximize it. This is a kind of one-dimensional insanity of positional confinement which currently runs the global economy, but is believed to ensure the best of possible worlds by “the invisible hand” (theory) and “market magic” (policy representation). Only detaching from positional confinement within such a system can enable a rational view of it – as opposed to merely presupposing it within one of its functions. Without such non-positional consciousness, people become more frenetic at meeting its competitive demands within one position or another of its vast mechanism in which one’s life is dictated, surrounded and lost, and sooner or later discarded. When ‘the System’ thus runs the people as its transient parts and operations, they are enslaved to it beneath self-recognition. At the same time and more than any previous system, it is world-wide in extension with no opposition to its rule allowed within its global military and financial reach. This is why in the recent global crash of the world money-sequence system, there was no hint of recognition in reigning circles of restructuring the system to human life requirements - even as tens of millions of citizens lost their jobs, homes and life security, and the world’s ecosystems collapsed under its polluting and looting systems of extraction, manufacture and transportation. Even in the historic moment of truth and unprecedented opportunity for imperative system shifts – for example, towards public-utility banks and job-creating environmental technology to resolve the general system crisis - the only emergency that was recognized was to restore the growth of the ruling mechanism to more money-value growth for the few again. One can see the evil nature of such a system from a non-positional standpoint, but this resource is not available to those within it. From competing market corporations and states to the transnational financial management of the G-20/IMF/BIS/WTO, the common life interests of workers, social sectors, and natural life support systems do not compute to the ruling meta-program.

13.9.2.1. The Life Whole and Witness Consciousness in Philosophy

Philosophy’s freedom is to stand outside given positions to critically understand them. The problem with contemporary philosophy has been that non-positional thinking is usually confined within the self-referential discourses of philosophy itself. The wider

world of system rule is tacitly presupposed so that, as Paul Freire explains in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, consciousness is submerged in the reigning structure of oppression. “De-submergence” from it is the first principle of liberation. This humanizing consciousness is exactly defined by Michel Foucault in *Knowledge/Power*: “Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it its meaning: rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and question it as to its meaning, its conditions and goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem”.

Like other philosophers, Foucault does not adopt global money-sequence capitalism as ‘an object of thought and question’. As elsewhere, the ruling value system surrounding the philosopher is not examined, although he does examine the “archaeology” of repressing the marginalized in asylums, prisons, and so on. This consideration brings us to the meaning of *witness* consciousness as something more than non-positional consciousness. It is non-positional consciousness that in some way declares affirmation of the life whole so as to bring into light unseen lives that are discounted. One could say Jesus of Nazareth was such a witness consciousness, going beyond witness to the actions that brought about his execution as a *political* criminal, the meaning that no church yet explains. More philosophically articulated ‘witness consciousness’ is provided by Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Leibniz in the Enlightenment period of modernity. Each affirms a rational world whole in the light of which all life is brought into reason’s consideration. In this sense, their philosophical vision is the opposite of the analytic, postmodern and specialist-science frameworks in which the life whole disappears. Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) geometrically deduces a rational community overcoming all positional limitation in an inclusive and integrated ideal conception in which “the minds and bodies should form as it were, one single mind and one single body”. “Hence men who are good by reason”, he argues, “should desire for themselves nothing which they do not desire for the rest of humankind” (proposition XVIII, the *Ethics*). This non-positional rationality is witness consciousness insofar as it thus brings into unseen light the lives that are discounted. One may think here of the majority of humankind without property or life security. We can observe here a rationalist prototype of the life coherence principle.

Another great exemplar of non-positional rationality is Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), Bertrand Russell’s philosopher of choice for his first major philosophical work. Leibniz conceives of a great continuum of being in which rigid separation and disconnection is irrational, and not thought through in imagination. We might see here as well the anticipation of the vision of Russell’s elder colleague, Alfred North Whitehead, in his *Modes of Thought* (see Bibliography). Leibniz explains in personal correspondence with Varignon in 1702: “Men are linked with the animals, these with the plants, and these with the fossils, which in turn merge with those bodies which our senses and imagination represent to us as absolutely inanimate - - All the orders of natural being form but a single chain - - - so that it is impossible for the senses or the imagination to determine precisely the point at which one ends, and the other begins”. Non-positional human consciousness is here an articulated philosophical witness grounded in a progressive infinite of life across space-time.

Leibniz is also a founder of the infinitesimal calculus, bridging regressive and progressive infinities in a way not done again until Albert Einstein. In sharp contrast, the non-positional ground of human identity and meaning is quite inconceivable to theorists within the global market and on the moon for business policy deciders. Nonetheless the human world's consciousness of itself as a connected terrestrial life and life support system is an emergent consciousness in this era, a return of the 'great chain of being' in scientific terms. What life-value onto-axiology adds are the missing *life-value* terms which have been absent in criterion, in measure, and in coherence principle. Through energy and water collapses to floods and explosions, the life-value framework of understanding recognizes life support systems as the non-positional material ground of sound understanding. Life-value witness, in turn, brings into light the unseen lives and life conditions that have been discounted, and integrates their value meaning into the more comprehensive conception of this ecology of value.

13.10. Beyond the Closed Circles of Economic and Evolutionary Understanding

In the contemporary world, as prior analysis has explained, the ruling value syntax is life-blind in principle. The possessor of money value (the *subject*) seeks to have more money value (*verb*) whether the self is individual, corporate, or national, and whatever the money-value forms involved (the *modifiers*). This value syntax regulates what is called 'global market competition', and blocks out all life support systems a-priori. Thus even when building ecological catastrophes are recognized within scientific circles of the system, the money-value mechanism selecting for them remains presupposed. Thus instead of being subordinated to the life support requirements of the human species and terrestrial existence itself, it not only evades naming as causal mechanism, but is universalized further as a panacea to all ills. This is why resolution of global climate destabilization crisis proceeds, as we have seen, by government conferral of corporate rights to pollute and trade these rights for private profit in new carbon markets. This is "the only method that can work" through the regulating lenses of perception. The deeper destabilization of hydrological cycles at every level cannot yet be connected into meaning. As in any form of system worship – the species' deepest disorder – it cannot be recognized as the problem by those who house it.

Metaphysics of "human nature" are, instead, the standard recourse for explaining persistently pathogenic patterns of human behavior. The contemporary form of this recourse is genetic. In the words of Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene*, (1985): "genes make us what we are" and determine human behavior as blind "gene machines" in "savagely competition". Dawkins adds that "ruthless exploitation and deceit" are also prescribed by the genetic formula. This conception of 'human nature' fits the global capitalist market like a glove and an alibi at once. The reigning system is ultimately determined by our genes - "nature's machinery" through the ruling value syntax. Concern of human beings for life and life value as such is, therefore, discounted a-priori. Mutual life support is merely a strategy of gene machines for self-advantageous exchange. "There is no more to it than that", echoes the chorus, as in the work of Michael Ruse. Nonetheless, Dawkins allows that "the worst selfish excesses of the blind replicators" can think ahead at the symbolic level ("foresight"), and self regulate by a cooperative code – the only way to "save us". Life-value understanding agrees with this conclusion, but points out that it does not follow from the premises of genetic-

determinist theory. This is why Dawkins pulls back to discredit such an alternative as “a conspiracy of doves” which has “no place in nature” (p. 215). At this point, explanation flounders. Given that human and all other living beings are only “throwaway survival machines” to house the reproduction of atomic genes, there are no resources for analysis of the changeable value regimes and rule systems of societies which decide whether society can be ‘saved’ or not, and how . At the same time, since the theory is only for the physical bodies of animals, recognition of intrinsic life value itself – the basis of any life-coherent human turn - is excluded by definition. Explanation of human identity and meaning again comes to a dead end.

In fact, the artificial symbolic and rule constructs which decide the human condition across bodies and spatio-temporal locations are a-priori absent in the world evolutionary biology seeks to explain. They are as beyond its competence as grammar, comedy and value wars are. In terms of life-and-death matters like human regulation of water-sewage cycles and life-protective laws or not, and of what kind and effect, human reality operates at altogether different levels than genetic transmission. These elective and symbol-transmitted constructs are *not found in nature*. Interestingly, Charles Darwin himself takes the leap towards a higher normative understanding of humanity and its socially constructed forms when he explicitly distinguishes “civilized men” from “savages” in *The Origin of Species*. He recognizes humanity’s moral movement of “checking the process of elimination” of weaker members, and he attributes this sea-change in behavior not to natural selection, but what opposes it, “the noblest part of human nature” (p. 501). Life-value analysis would agree in spirit. Yet it recognizes the categories of understanding here as radically inadequate to explanation and grossly ethnocentric, however revealing as a normative reversal of ‘Social Darwinism’ by the master himself. The problem still remains therefore *how to explain human concern for life as of intrinsic value and the regulators to enable life in the world against natural selection*. This is the realm of civil commons evolution whose collective choice space and historical development are in principle beyond the parameters of biology and market economics to comprehend. Their contemporary theoretical , axis is at a loss here, and so simply abstracts out the ultimately distinguishing features of human identity and meaning. Only circular explanations are produced, and they follow an unseen pattern of reversion in logical form - “we *must* have a gene for such concern for other life not advantaging us, or it cannot reproduce” or “it must deliver more market returns or it is economically irrelevant”. No other explanation can enter these circular returns which, in fact, lead to outer cycles of disaster. When explanations turn into repetitions of first premises, and certitudes into fixed theoretical circles, understanding must open to non-circular explanation to break past the catastrophic round.

13.11. To Understand and Identify with the Life Whole: The Meta-Choice of Human Vocation and Meaning

The great value-system turns of historical humanity demonstrate what no known scientific or even philosophical account explains. Deep turns in socially ruling value sets have defined advances and regressions of human societies over millennia in contingent expression of the primary axiom of life value. With each example now cited, consider any known explanatory logic which can tell us *why* these unpredictable great shifts in socially constructed forms of life have occurred – wide public repudiation across the world of the age-old paterfamilias right to kill any member of the family

including wives, children and servants (as in the still revered Old Testament); the advancing abolition of ritual tortures and deaths for religious or other non-conformers across centuries and cultures; the war-filled process of colonial conquest for unrestricted free trade in slaves across borders into the late modern era; the international legal prohibition of long asserted rights of powerful nations to commit genocide across epochs into the 1939-45 War; the centuries-long struggle to stop and reverse the subjugation of women as chattel or non-persons continuing into the twentieth century and over much of the world still today; the prolonged and still resisted elimination of racist and speciesist assumptions regulating instituted practices of mass life torment and oppression of countless human and non-human beings across borders; and the public regulation of open sewer, stack, pipe and moving-belt pollutions by toxic wastes as no longer an accepted private right of corporations – the last an historic life-value advance which is still successfully from implementation blocked within the reigning money-value system. How are these great movements of humanity to be explained?

To say that these were genetically decided sea-shifts in social value system is absurd. To say that they were determined by natural competition for survival cannot explain why all are precisely limits on its processes of selection and elimination. To say that they were all advantageous exchanges for self gain cannot explain why they were not before. To say that they were adaptations of a psychological or economic equilibrium does not explain their moves beyond previous equilibria. To say that they were determined by geographical conditions does not explain why the prior received form of human life was not. To argue they were determined by productive force development or capitalism does not explain why the very life conditions of this development are more systematically depredated today. To say that they are another level of the gift-exchange structure of anthropological evolution fails to explain why the private financial system now controls the medium of exchange itself with no gifts back. And so on. No received theory accounts for the contingent facts of life-value social shifts forward or backwards. They cannot be explained by any determinist or scientific-law account because the shifts *can go either way* even in the same society in the same decade. They cannot be understood in principle until the social choice space in one direction or the other is recognized rather than abstracted out. What we know for certain is that they were all chosen and accepted against established past forms of life; that all have required great pain and struggle at many levels to be won if not still contested; and that all have demonstrably endured as more life protective and enabling forms.

What regulating features can we find common to all? Each and all have been motivated by concern for better life, and all realize the primary axiom of life value in some fundamental way. Yet there is no inevitability to the life-value advance before the higher form of human life is won. Nor does any external law determine their results. Each must be consistent with physical laws, but this is a richly fertile choice space which life-value onto-axiology adopts as a first principle of understanding. What occurs *within* the ranges of material possibility always admits of polar-opposite value options. One can explain what has happened again and again across history in no other way than to say a *social choice was somehow made and socially registered in a ruling form of life to protect and enable human or other life where before it was not*. In fact, this underlying human choice space for life-value stand and advance of form of life – or continued life-blind rule – confronts human societies now more than ever in history. Yet

the momentous social choices that human societies must now make to enable global life and life conditions to recover and flourish from their systemic despoliation are now paralyzed in impasse between the absolutist money-value system and the required rule-system changes for a more life coherent ordering. Battles for reforms are fought on many terrains, but the life-value logic of system re-set is not comprehended in governing principles – that is, the reproductive requirements of society’s social and natural life support systems adopted as non-positional life-ground with which every relevant decision structures must be consistent.

This is the nature of the life-coherent form of any social order. Many societies may have developed national and provincial environmental protection agencies and regulations to safeguard the environment and natural life capital: but if they are not unfunded and unenforced, they are effectively annulled by new rights of capital to move to unregulated resource-looting regions and freely sell the products back into home societies. The same logic of global misrule repeats in many ways and on many planes. Unprecedented international covenants and agreements on social forms of life have been codified and passed by the world’s governments - to abolish war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, torture, death from deprivation, malnutrition, illiteracy and lack of health care, for example – as explained in Chapter The Unseen Global War Of Rights Systems And Its Principles Of Resolution. Yet they are so ignored in the global corporate regime that few know even of their existence. Universal minimal laws and norms to protect biodiversity, endangered species and climate stability have been struck and signed with more public notice, but fail to perform their objectives within a reigning disorder of rising species extinctions, habitat destruction, uncontrolled pollutions and hydrological-ocean cycle destabilizations. The meta-pattern has been laid bare in this study, but the underlying ultimate human identity and concern which drives the age-old struggle for advance of social forms has been rendered essentially unconscious.

13.12. The Ecology of Life Value Finding Its Unifying Form

Good theories from many quarters recognize this or that deep social advance, but are apt to attribute it to a lawlike mechanism, missing its elective nature and contingency; or to rhetorically conceive it without any applicable value criterion or measure. The unifying lines of failure in such accounts are that they miss: (i) the principled ground of value meaning across domains; (ii), the rule-system form that any advance must issue in to be effective in the world; and (iii) the contingency on societal life concern required for any progressive change to hold across generations. For example, contemporary entomologist and geneticist, E.O. Wilson, speaks of *biophilia*, literally “life love” and he explains it in his study, *Biophilia* (1986) as “the connections that human beings subconsciously seek with the rest of life”, and that “to explore and affiliate with life is a deep and complicated process of mental development”. Life-value onto-axiology again agrees up to a point, but observes radical shortfalls of conception. To begin with, there is an apparent self-contradiction - or at least want of mediating principles - between the “innate” genetic disposition that Wilson hypothesizes and the “deep and complicated process of mental development” he requires for it to be realized. More precisely, Wilson’s explanation fails to give any actual genetic evidence; provides no criterial meaning to the sweeping “connections with” that are claimed; skips the social value system determination of whether these relations exist or not in the outer world; is

indiscriminate regarding the forms of life with which human beings affiliate (are snakes and spiders innately loved?); and plays on an equivocation of ‘subconscious’ which is apparently consistent with any behavior at all (e.g., most people’s known *non*-affiliative connections to biting insects and snakes, not to mention harmless livestock). Life-value analysis meets these problems by not asserting a genetic program, but identifying the choice space pro and con; by exact criteria and degrees of possibility; and by emphasis on elective values and social rules in this affiliation.

Erich Fromm who coined the term *biophilia* lies at the opposite end of methodological spectrum from the etymologist E.O. Wilson and is equivocal in another way. A Freudian by training, he talks of “life drives” and “libido”, but what exactly these mean is not clear or capable of measure or disconfirmation. As with Freud too, albeit far more system- critically – Fromm relies on an open-ended mythic term of “eros” without criteria. Like Freud and theories of human motivations and behavior in general, he does not ground in the demonstrable human life needs and goods, and is inexact on how we can tell life goods themselves. Herbert Marcuse comes from the same humanist school of Critical theory as Fromm, and is similarly indeterminate in conception. He features “vital human needs” instead of ‘drives’ at his onto-ethical base, but provides no principle by which we can know what is and is not a vital need, and no unifying framework of substantive meaning, as we saw in Section 8.13. Marcuse’s most ringing life-value declaration is in *An Essay on Liberation* where he says (emphases added): “the *Form* of freedom is not merely self-determination and realization, but rather the determination and realization of goals which enhance, protect and unite life on earth”. Life-value theory agrees, but defines the missing criteria of the value concepts invoked. For life-value onto-axiology, ‘the *Form* of freedom’ requires the exactly delimiting lines of regulating principle *and* social rule-set to ensure life coherent meaning. Instead ideal universals are relied on by Marcuse without the required life standards of principle and practice. This is what the primary axiom, life-coherence imperative and life-value onto-axiology provide, with the ecology of life value they entail extending, as critical theory does not, intrinsic life value to the non-human world.

Marcuse’s primary intellectual mentor, Karl Marx, appears to meet this ecology gap when he says in his posthumous volume III of *Capital*: “From the standpoint of a higher form of society, ownership of the earth will seem quite as absurd as ownership of one man over another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies together, do not own the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructaries, and like *boni paterfamilias* they must hand it down in improved condition”. Again life-value onto-axiology agrees up to a point, but holds that societies are not “possessors” of the world, that other life forms have intrinsic life value in themselves independent of humanity, and that the earth’s “improved condition” requires life-value standards not provided.

13.12.1. The Missing Life-Value Ecology Wherever We Look

Karl Jung strikingly recognizes the ‘life spirit’ in his *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. Here he distinguishes between the “conscious soul” of the on-the-brink-of-suicide philosopher, Faust, and the “unconscious soul” of Mephistopheles, the “shadow self” and “true spirit of life against the arid scholar”. Between the lines, Jung opposes

the “life unconscious”, as life-value theory identifies it, against the hollowing-out ego of the self-maximizing academic, more familiar than ever today. Faust the ambitious ego becomes destructive, Jung suggests, because he represses his ‘true spirit of life’. Life-ground onto-ethics again agrees, but finds Jung’s concepts of “collective unconscious”, “archetype”, “soul” and “shadow self” to be obscure, and directly grounds the split of personal identity Faust represents in what is clearly life-grounded: the conflict between the life-blind regime regulating the individual and the underlying human life needs it represses and perverts – with Faust and the culture he symbolizes, by their ‘pact with the devil’ to forfeit human life realization to acquire externally conferred powers. The life unconscious is the result of what is suppressed by the life-blind regulating value system. This is the primordial longing of human life to be more comprehensive life, not egoically acquisitive and self-maximizing. John Dewey recognizes what Jung obscures, the regulating social order which perverts this human life identity and vocation. In his little-known *Liberalism and Social Action* (1962), uncited even by those who cite regard Dewey as the greatest liberal philosopher of the twentieth century, he writes: “The actual corrosive ‘materialism’ of our time does not spring from science. It springs from the notion sedulously cultivated by the class in power, that the creative capacities of individuals can be evoked and developed only in a struggle for material possessions and material gain. - - But the cause of liberalism will be lost for a considerable period if it is not prepared to go further and socialize the forces of production, now at hand, so that the liberty of individuals will be supported by the very structure of economic organization. - - The eclipse of liberalism is due to the fact that it has not faced the alternatives upon which realization of its objectives depend” (pp. 89-90).

Dewey decodes the social disorder behind the psychological malaise Jung mystifies in the individual, but the deep human longing for alternative and what it consists in remains undefined. The life-value criteria required for ‘productive forces’ and their ‘socialization’ remain absent as well. While Jung thus addresses derivative manifestations of the human longing to be more comprehensive life by cultural ‘archetypes’(like the repressed female ‘anima’ in men), he delinks from natural and social life grounds. Dewey, on the other hand, does not find the life-ground beneath the social in any defined way. What both psychoanalysis and philosophy do not examine in general, and economic theory misconceives, are life values themselves which productive forces are meant to produce, and whose deprivation seats the frustrated necessities at unconscious levels - in society most disastrously. Theory is not yet clear that the universal goods of human life are not drive or desire objects, not priced commodities, nor the productive forces that make them, not eros sublimations, nor anything else but that without which life capacities are reduced, earth’s life-carrying capacities most basically of all. For life-value ecology, then, any good at all is only truly good if coherent with other life reproduction and species flourishing; and it is life compossible in the most elementary sense only when the life support systems of all are never degraded or destroyed. This is the primary *life-ecology test*. We may see in striking contrast how non-ecological contemporary theory becomes when we look to the once-Marxist advocate of *Humanisme et terrorisme* and subsequently Western thought’s leading phenomenological philosopher of the lived body - one of the most wide-ranging philosophers in the Francophone-Anglophone canon, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. “The flesh” he adopts as the object of his understanding is the limit of the “intercorporeity” he describes. No life bearings and interconnections beyond it compute,

and no life-value distinctions are recognized.

13.13. The Unseen General Moral Operator: Humanity's Felt Bonds of Being across Species and Death

The ultimate principle of human identity for life-value understanding is that human beings find the meaning of life the more coherently and inclusively they comprehend and enable life and life support systems across generational time. This human identity is long ago recognized in radical idealist terms by the Chinese philosopher Wang Yang-Ming (1472-1529) who calls humanity “the mind of heaven and earth”: that is, decoded, the human life capacity to identify universally with all other beings and so to comprehend “their laws of unceasing production and reproduction”. The latter is a concept grounding life-value onto-axiology as well, but in profound contrast to Wang, given content by empirical science rather than the “searching within the mind” he recommends as the “way of knowledge”. In further deep contrast, life-value understanding emphasizes life fields and range beyond ‘reproduction’, the creative life space within which humanity uniquely dwells and shapes new forms of thought and social life – the change dimension of social orders that Confucianism rules out. Nonetheless, Wang produced what no-one else has, an elementary experiential proof of the human capacity to identify universally in a concretely verifiable form. This intrinsic human capacity Wang demonstrates is what life-value onto-axiology builds on - a higher order of consciousness of human identity, a bridge from the moral to ecological comprehension as ultimately indivisible, and what enables human life forms to be deathless in life-carrying capacity. “*Forming one body* with Heaven, Earth and the myriad things is not only true of the great man”, Wang argues. “Even the mind of the small man is no different. Only he makes his mind small. Therefore when he sees a child about to fall down a well, he cannot but be alarmed in fellow feeling. This shows that his humanity forms one body with the child. It may be objected that the child belongs to the same species. Yet when he hears the pitiful cries and frightened appearance of birds and animals about to be slaughtered, he cannot help feeling an inability to bear their suffering. This shows that his humanity forms one body with birds and animals. It may be objected that birds and animals are sentient beings as he is. But when he sees pants broken and trees destroyed, he cannot help feeling distress. It may be objected that plants are living things as he is. Yet even when he sees tiles and stones shattered and crushed, he cannot help feeling regret. This shows his humanity forms one body even with tiles and stones”.

Observe that this argument develops from direct experiences which can be found across cultures. Even small-minded men may feel spontaneous identification with other forms of life which they see threatened with destruction. Feeling thought resonates with life violation across species, extending even to inanimate human constructions. In expression of what we might call the life unconscious of humanity insofar as it is repressed, the author identifies an unspoken and repressed connection to other beings across divisions. We find here a more articulated form of the ‘biophilia’ analyzed in E.O. Wilson. Like Wilson, Wang Yang-Ming claims this felt connection is innate, while life-value onto-axiology recognizes its contingent nature. Yet as in life-value ecology, if only implicitly, Wang suggests that humanity’s feeling thought of disturbance corresponds to the life value about to be destroyed: human being as the greatest life

value loss, animals next, plant-life next, and the broken integrity of objects last. In implicit accord with the primary axiom of value, the violation is in proportion to the extent of loss of life value in thinking, feeling and action fields. Not many people today will deny these symptoms of distress at other beings about to be destroyed before their eyes, but few anywhere distinguish the felt affects as in correlation with the life value about to be lost. These manifestations of human life identity are, on the contrary, screened out by the ruling value syntax. While Wang's argument only excavates the meaning of life here at the level of sympathetic reaction, the implications go much further. These are felt bonds of human being not comprehended by contemporary philosophy or the sciences, and the underlying ecology of life value they motivate does not yet exist in the mainstream of either. Rather, as explained in prior sections, dominant contemporary thought and public commentary presuppose with evolutionary biology, economics, behavioral psychology and decision theory that humans are best modeled as self-maximizing desiring mechanisms. Like finches, rats, and market agents, they are indifferent to what does not serve this mechanism's demands. Nonetheless, unexplained basic facts remain. Most people we know cannot help but protect their own heads when others' are endangered by falling objects, cannot bear to see an animal butchered although they eat them all the time, cannot stay with the image of a starving child without diversion, and cannot bear a clear cut forest unless they are invested in it. The lived examples are innumerable of this underlying extended life identity of human beings, however life-value indifference may be built into the ruling social system.

This deeper 'life unconscious' is the vaguely felt side of life support collapse in the world today – what many seem to sense, but lack the conceptual resources to bring to conscious understanding. Humanity's underlying bonds of being are buried far deeper in the contemporary unconscious than sexual desire. Even when the poet John Keats exactly affirms the human power of entering into the being of other beings to inhabit their life form, he names it a "*negative capability*". The philosopher Tom Nagel denies it is even possible in principle in his celebrated "What Is It Like To Be A Bat?" Yet this human life impulsion to enter other life forms is expressed in the most diverse and universal phenomena – for example, the pervasive animal names, images and imitative forms have been prominent throughout the species history. While negated as 'irrational', this adoption of the forms of other beings is evident in the most intelligent human practices – creative and figurative language, scientific discovery, and the martial arts, for example. Yet even when a Nobel Prize winning geneticist, Barbara McLintock, talks of "listening to the organism - - - feeling as if I were right down there, and these were my friends", she is regarded as 'peculiar' despite her proven success. Humanity is thus alienated from its felt bonds of being with the rest of terrestrial life, while wider attunement to the cosmos itself is conceived as unscientific mysticism. Yet consider what Albert Einstein says of scientific method. A powerful felt coherence with the planetary whole is explained as the very motive force of science. "Intoxicated joy and amazement at the beauty and the grandeur of the world", he says, "is the feeling from which true scientific research draws its sustenance". Yet there are great dangers to felt connection to a wider life whole if not comprehended in a life-coherent and compossible way. People can be attached to *partial* wholes of nation, blood and soil, race, class, and worship of ruling system – man's most destructive failure of human value and meaning. This derangement is always detectable, nonetheless, by its incoherence with the life requirements of those excluded.

Always the true meaning of life for humanity is the *forms* of life it constructs to more inclusively enable life fields across individuals, societies and species, the dynamic framework of all compossible life advance. Yet with no life coherence principle recognized at any steering level or decision structure of the now reigning global system, the fatal disorder is not effectively identified any more than in the microcosm of Easter Island before Captain Cook's voyages. The difference now is that humanity has the evidence of past peoples and civilizations collapsing into their exhausted life grounds. It also has the knowledge available to decode the inner logic and ruling value system determining every moment of the depredatory system annihilation across terrestrial life support structures. At the same time, the world's democratic electronic communication networks enable what has never been conceivable before, open webs of immediate direct disclosure and shared knowledge against system propaganda machines.

The human condition is riven to the core. Its finally contending forces are common life-value advance versus private money-sequence growth, civil commons building versus mechanical reductionism, and life-coherent knowledge versus manufactured partial appearances. All are at war at once, and all the ties of human life identity and meaning go one way. The choice structure is what is not seen.

Glossary

- Compossibility principle:** The principle to uphold the value of life to the most inclusive possible level without life-value loss.
- Ecology of justice:** The branch of ecology of life value applying to human societies: that is, the relations among individuals in a society such that each receives what s/he is due in rights and obligations towards universal life goods provision for all. See also **Ecology of life value**.
- Ecology of life value:** The totality of relations among species, their reproduction and distribution conceived in terms of life value to enable more compossibly inclusive life-system wholes, the **primary axiom of value** in ecological form.
- First-person test:** A thought experiment or test which penetrates beneath the external observer position adopted by science and mechanism to disclose life capacities of consciousness which are overlooked or implicitly denied. Its method is distinguished from **phenomenology** by demonstration of non-intentional consciousness.
- Infinite:** Life-value onto-axiology distinguishes between *the regressive infinite* (infinite divisions into infinitesimally smaller units) and *the progressive infinite* (infinite extension of human consciousness and material universe).
- Non-intentional consciousness:** Consciousness which is not consciousness *of* something.
- Non-positional** Consciousness which is not from any position within the

consciousness: situation on which it reflects.

Witness consciousness: Non-positional consciousness that in some way critically declares affirmation of the life whole so as to bring into light unseen lives that are discounted.

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Biographical Sketch

John McMurtry holds his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Toronto, Canada and his Ph.D from the University of London, England, and has been Professor of Philosophy at the University of Guelph for over 20 years and University Professor Emeritus since 2005. He is an elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and his many articles, chapters, books and interviews have been internationally published and translated.