

MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN QUESTION

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Summary

What is the ground of value by whose compass we ought to live? This essay explains why this ultimate question is screened out by contemporary philosophy, and evaluates a conflicting spectrum of major value theories to determine each's soundness as a guide to individual and social life - analytic moral philosophy, market and Marxian doctrines, organic desire theory, and transcendental ideals. A needs theory of value alone is found alone to provide an objective ground of moral truth, but is shown to be limited in its comprehension of what is of intrinsic worth. In conclusion, the chapter proposes a bridge across materialist and idealist philosophies by life-value onto-ethics.

3.1. The Underlying Problem of Moral Philosophy: Decoupling from the Life-Ground

Competing moral theories are numerous. They include not only the pro-happiness and anti-pain theories analyzed in the prior chapter, but virtue and self-realizationist ethics, emotivism, intuitionism, religious ethics, contractarian morality, and so on.

What is in common across these diverse moral philosophies is what they all lack. As we will continue to see in this study, the baseline principles of received moral and value theories are decoupled from the life-ground - all the conditions everyone requires to draw the next breath. Even when values are reconnected to body-activating desires, still no connection to life capacities, needs or support systems is made. Yet before we map this moral life-groundlessness across theories, we need to remind ourselves of the underlying distinction between moral values and other kinds of value.

The basic difference is that moral positions tell us what ought to be done, and moral philosophy properly investigates what these ought-claims mean, how they disagree, whether they stand up to critical scrutiny, and - ultimately - whether their regulating principles are truly universalizable and overriding. The underlying pattern through over 25 centuries of such moral thinking, however, has been the absence of any sustained agreement on what these ultimate moral principles *are*. This age-old pattern has culminated - as shown in the previous sections - in a widespread denial in the cosmopolitan world of today that universal moral principles are even possible across diverse world-views and practices. The consensus has become that such moral principles are no longer credible across cultural and domain differences.

3.1.1. Non-Prescribed Values and the Limits of Moral Meaning

Non-moral values, in contrast, are values which do *not* tell people how to act. Beauty, for example, may have sound standards to recognize it (an issue which the field of Aesthetics investigates), but it makes little sense to say that beauty is obligatory. On the contrary, beauty is likely to be a creative or sublime configuration beyond beholders' own capacities to imitate, and thus not prescribable as moral rules.

There may also be standards of knowledge and truth (the question with which the field of Epistemology is concerned), but this area of philosophy too is kept distinct from moral philosophy insofar as non-compliance does not, as with moral rules, entail guilt or punishment for those not following them.

3.2. The Conventional Tendency: Prescribing and Punishing Without Good Reason

With conventional moral thought, a main problem is the imposition of prescriptions and prohibitions where there is no moral justification for them. Consider, for example, customs and laws which demand conformity to standards that are merely issues of taste, opinion or religious belief with no life harm involved in breaking them. There are myriad such conventional prescriptions and punishments for disobeying them, and all may be judged a wrong so far as they disable rather than enable people's lives, as with

life-blind conventions elevated to universal commands.

Distinguishing reasonable and unreasonable moral demands is what John Stuart Mill (1806-73) painstakingly seeks to do in his classic, *On Liberty* (1859). “The only justification for society interfering in the liberty of any of its members”, Mill famously argues, “is self-protection” or “to prevent harm”.

Life-value ethics specifies the distinction much more precisely. It adds the modifying qualifying phrase “*life capacities*” to define exactly *what* is to be protected and not harmed - an unanswered issue in Mill’s and other moral theories. The harm principle is spelled out in such a way that another cannot say harm is done by actions which do not reduce anyone’s range of life function.

3.3. The Professional Tendency: Moral Philosophy without Life Substance

The profoundest limitation of contemporary moral philosophy itself is that, unlike Mill, its arguments typically fail to engage issues of moral substance i.e., relevant to how we live. On the contrary, this most basic question of moral thought, how we ought to live, has been essentially avoided, especially with regard to the surrounding ruling system of reward and deprivation. Here, at the very ultimate ground of moral substance, there tends to be pronounced silence.

3.3.1. Technical Exclusion

On the fine-grained level, the method of avoidance of moral substance consists simply in ruling out any issue that does not technically fit within the given parameters of the specialty discourse.

Instead, questions of the logical status of ought, stylized taxonomies of competing moral theories and stock counter-arguments, and specialist disputes emptied of life content prevail in moral philosophy. A *cordon sanitaire* is invisibly drawn against substantive moral issues. Or, at the other extreme, stereotyped media issues - for example, pro and con capital punishment or abortion - may be endlessly revisited with ruling social value system unexamined.

3.3.2. Substantive Exclusion

Substantive ethics thus disappear into a thin formalism, as Kai Nielsen’s chapter entitled *The Poverty of Moral Philosophy* shows. Nielsen, like the dominant method he describes, fails to distinguish between the ruling style of moral philosophy and substantive moral philosophy with a life-ground.

3.3.3. Meta-Ethics and Agent-Relative Moral Theory: The Life-Ground Abstracted Out

In general, moral philosophy and ethics in the globally dominant Anglo-American tradition are equated to what is called “*meta-ethics*” which in principle rules out issues of substantive good and evil. Analyses are confined to arguments about the logic and

received types of moral theory and a-priori exclude actual moral problems of life-and-death choice. Meta-ethics as the descriptor for such inquiry takes this very thin version of value analysis as its given.

Another unnoticed form of blocking out issues of ultimate moral substance - such as the moral principles by which societies themselves live - is to confine moral agency to *individual* judgment and action, or “*agent-relative*” ethics. Thus the rules regulating society itself are screened out. On the other hand, philosophers who do call into question basic assumptions of the ruling value-system within which they live are may not survive as philosophers - as the execution of Socrates reminds us. Today, the punishment is more likely to be no position in graduate or faculty philosophy.

3.3.4. Methodological Censorship and the Contractarian Model

The unseen structure of contemporary censorship is ignoring or defunding whatever conflicts with the presupposed social value regime. Typically any such social heresy is methodologically screened out prior to scrutiny. Contemporary philosophy, for example, features fictive contracts of atomic rational agency to define the just or moral order in rigorous abstraction from the actual world’s relationships. While the modern “contractarian model” begins with theories of justice grounded in alleged “laws of nature” - for example, the theories of Thomas Hobbes (1558-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704) - they nowhere question their surrounding regimes of rule.

In the latter twentieth century, the contractarian model switches its ground of legitimacy - from laws of nature to self-maximizing rational agents choosing abstract principles of justice and morality in a methodological life vacuum (e.g., John Rawls (1921-2006) and David Gauthier (1932 -). Such “social/moral contract” constructions are one major convention among others in contemporary moral thought: but despite their very clear differences from each other, they are alike in decoupling analysis from any life-ground or challenge to the existing social order.

3.3.5. Blocking Out How We Live

Thus although philosophy is the only form of inquiry methodologically suited to call into question the first principles of any ruling value system, this is tacitly taboo territory for critical inquiry. Such investigation need not be directly outlawed. In Islamic states or medieval Christendom or contemporary capitalism alike, methodological set-points of inquiry fence this thought zone off. At the same time, the received set-points of contemporary social science block out such inquiry in the name of “value neutrality”. In these ways, the relevant academic disciplines avoid critical investigation of the first principles of how we in fact live.

3.3.5.1. Moral philosophers and ethical theorists are more concerned with the nature of moral language and whether right is to be judged by consequences of actions (“consequentialism”) or the principles governing the actions themselves (“non-consequentialism” or “deontology”), the most persistent area of dispute. In applied ethics, selected issues within isolated and abnormal conditions are much analyzed, but not the ultimately regulating norms of society’s everyday life and their relationship to

social and ecological life support systems.

3.4. Evaluating Social Value Systems: Off-Limits Even to Marxian Thought

The failure of moral theories East and West has been that the ruling social order is seldom if ever opened to question, and almost never critically investigated as a value system.

An apparent exception is the general theory of Karl Marx (1818-83). Yet he himself rejected the study of morality and moral theory, regarding them as merely rationalizing forms of ideology justifying the economic order and the overriding rights of the ruling class.

3.4.1. The Unexamined Value System That Governs the Economy

One need not disagree with Marx's critique to recognize that he fails to recognize that ultimately regulating principles of value and disvalue govern the economic order itself, organizing rules of money value which govern every function of the system. Thus, in fact, "the money sequence of value", as explained in *The Global Crisis of Values*, continuously overrides the underlying "life sequence of value" with little or no account taken of organic or ecological life foundations. Although the rules people collectively live by set their ultimate moral grounds and obligations as a society, no zone of inquiry is so little examined by moral philosophy and theory in general.

In part this is because the individual agent is presupposed as the sole moral subject to consider - an inherited first premise of philosophical method which is itself not examined as an issue. Indeed not even Marxian analysis which is unique in its dedication to change the ruling social order penetrates this level of normative agency. The social value system is, rather, bracketed out by supposition of economic-historical laws that govern independently of human will. Thus the deciding normative order of society comes to be screened out by both its defenders and its adversaries.

3.4.2. All Concur in One Meta-Falsehood: The Ruling Value System Has No Option

According to the Marxian view, society's structure is not decided by its members, but by the internal laws of productive force development which correspond with and then come into contradiction with the laws of their capitalist form. Revolutionary transformation is, in Marx's words, as "inexorable as the metamorphoses of Nature".

Just as the necessity of the given order is oppositely assumed by others as an eternal given, the Marxian also assumes that the system governs humanity rather than the other way around. Thus for both, deciding how to live at the collective level is not an option. Moral philosophy itself is confined to individual choices. Social science repels value judgments as unscientific. And both Marxism and Capitalism absolutize economic laws over social moral agency - a major issue to which we will return.

3.4.3. Re-Grounding Values Inquiry at the Collective Level

Nonetheless the central concepts of moral philosophy apply as well to the social-normative level as to individual agents. The defining markers of a moral order are universalizable principles, over-ridingness of their requirements, and ultimate grounds for ought-prescriptions. The problem has been that this moral choice space is effectively taboo to consider at the level of a surrounding social value system - although it is that which commands the young to go to war, and otherwise controls the lives of its members. Its moral nature and legitimacy ought to be the ultimate issue of moral thought, but is not. While humanity may be defined as the rule-making species - *Homo regulator* - this collective level of human responsibility and value system is normally foreclosed.

Yet unlike physical laws or species instincts, the rules by which any human society lives are its own construction through time. They vary widely with peoples and circumstances, and are variously evolved over time. They can advance or regress, enable human flourishing or oppress life capacities, select for human and ecological life security or engineer for spasm species extinctions. Herein lies the ultimate ground of the human species' self-determination, but its axiological space is unexamined - a shared moral choice space of humanity which is mapped in depth in *The Lost Social Subject: Evaluating the Rules By Which We Live*.

3.5. What the Organism Wants: Desire Theory and its Fatal Flaw

In testing theories of what is good and what is bad, axiological reason asks one ultimate question. Does the candidate theory have truly universal value bearings and explanatory reach: that is, to whatever is of worth in any domain whatever?

These days, the question is assumed by philosophers as unanswerable. Almost none accepts the possibility of any one universal principle of value. Yet one who does prior to philosophy's turn away from universal values is Ralph Barton Perry (1876 - 1957). In his naturalist general theory, *Realms of Value* (1968), Perry proposes and systematically explains what he claims is an ultimate and universal principle of worth for all that lives. All values whatsoever, Perry asserts, are equivalent to the active interests or desires of organisms.

Perry's general principle of all value is concisely defined as follows: "*A thing - anything - has value or is valuable in the original and generic sense, when it is the object of interest - any interest*" (Perry, pp.2-3).

A value interest is then explained by Perry to be that which is characteristic of the "motor-affective" life of the organism, namely, "instinct, desire, purpose, will, feeling, emotion, motivation, etc.; whatever, in other words, constitutes man as a being who *acts* in behalf of what concerns him" (p. 15). "A thing is an object of interest," Perry further emphasizes, only "when its being sought induces actions that anticipate its realization or nonrealization" (p. 3).

3.5.1. The Demystification of Values

An appealing feature of Perry's theory is its demystifying level of analysis. Values are firmly rooted in what organisms - essentially human organisms - want in the world, and are willing to act to get. No philosopher of value has ever put the matter so directly, or so committed his or her criterion of value to an empirically verifiable state. Few have ever claimed the universality of application that Perry does - to everything that can be called a value.

Divine prescriptions, noumenal ideals and deontological intuitions are here left behind. All values whatever are concrete states of animate-life preferences. What economic theory presupposes as the inner impulsions of the consumer to get what s/he wants is here provided with its most developed philosophical justification.

3.5.2. The Problem with Desire Theory

The problem arises when one excavates and pursues deeper implications which Perry and consumerism both overlook. Consider the unexamined implications which are no more considered by Perry than the market theory his axiology justifies.

For example, it follows from Perry's universal principle of value that if it is fast motor-vehicles that people have an affective interest in acting on, rather than, say, preservation of atmospheric quiet and the habitats of other creatures, for which people may have no propulsive concern, then it is these former objects which have worth, and the latter, by logical entailment, have *no value at all*.

3.5.2.1. As long as value is made to depend on peoples' affective interest in them, how can desire itself ever be limited or recognized as wrong? The more desires there are, and the more they are satisfied, whatever they are, the better life is - even if this "good life" consumes the earth it feeds upon.

At the same time, this axiology prescribes that any value *not* selected for by the wants of organisms counts for nothing - the unappreciated landscape, or the intellectual value that ignorance overlooks, or indeed any value whatever that is not actively desired.

3.5.2.2. Such a framework of value cannot, therefore, include the environment or planetary ecology as of intrinsic value unless they are direct objects of desire. On the other hand, Perry's criterion recognizes the "moral status of animals", and accords them such status insofar as they feel pain - that which their interest and desire is to avoid (p.114).

Again, we return to a variant of the pleasure/pain theory of value. It leaves out all deeper values than felt subjective states. It includes non-human animals too, a path-breaking inclusion, but not their ecological life-hosts or non-appetitive concerns. Plato, who regarded appetite as the lowest plane of human being, would be appalled at such an idea of the good.

3.5.2.3. This value theory is, we might say, an animal theory of value. Yet it is not

restricted to the limits of the animal in what can be desired. The existence of masses of people getting more and more of what they want, is good in principle for this axiology. Their indifference to the pollution of the air, water and habitats in propulsion by their immediate desires does not count to this value calculus as long as desires impel them to do it.

3.5.3. Ecological Blindness in Principle

The worst feature of this theory of value is that even the value of the unseen conditions which make life possible, but are not themselves objects of desire inclinations, such as deep earth strata or unfelt atmospheric conditions, are screened out a-priori. This is an implication that is no more recognized by Perry than the global consumerism for which he provides the theoretical justification.

Insofar as the first principle of value here refers only to what is actively wanted, the earth and the air are valueless wherever they are merely presupposed, and so too are all other species. “Since motor-affective inclinations” alone guide value judgment, it is therefore compatible with this value system and the consumer ethic it justifies that virtually all life support systems themselves collapse beneath notice with no recognizable *values* crisis.

3.5.4. The Fatal Flaw: Theory and System Converge in Desires with No Limit

The desire doctrine of value which rules in this era has a fatal limit. None can comprehend it so long as they are confined within the circle of self desires as an end-in-itself with no accountability to what supports them. Perry’s value theory, the work of Harvard’s most eminent value theorist, rationalizes the global-market feeding cycle which depletes the world.

This is Plato’s nightmare, classical philosophers might say: but, more deeply, this logic of value can be eco-genocidal in effects with no resource of feedback correction.

3.6. The Paradox of Market Success: Magnitude of Desire Objects Multiplies Disvalues

To constrain uncontrolled individual desires, Perry argues for an “interest inclusive” or “harmonized” agreement of total desires. Can this principle work to solve the problems raised above? The answer is no. Life-serving rather than life-consuming desires are nowhere distinguished by Perry or market utility theory or postmodern desirousness without inhibition.

If, for example, leisure-machine drivers pursue their motor-affective desires in indifference to their filling the world with noise pollution, fumes and disease, the problem cannot be resolved. It can only be made worse by the greater magnitude of the desires all together.

3.6.1. Desires as Market Demand Which Decides Supply

Neoclassical theory and business doctrine implicitly agree with this value doctrine. People's active desires incite market choices to aggregates of the market's invisible hand perpetually adjusting supply to demand, with more environment-consuming commodities for more motor-affective desires leading market growth. The dynamic "equilibrium" of the market equates to the "harmony" of desires which Perry advocates.

Perry never considers any such issue, nor do neo-classical theory and market doctrine. In accord with the value civilization they express, there is no value ground beyond active self desires and the total volumes of value their desire objects are equated to. What is not observed is fatal. No version of the globally dominant value theory specifies any condition of contributing in any way to the life capacities of any organism, self or all life together. The life-ground disappears, and no need-desire distinction is made. Consequently, strong and reinforced desires for junk food or cosmetics or machine-guns confer a great "magnitude of value" on these manufactures and their consumption. Perry's philosophy and market theory correspond in their value measures.

Conversely, what does *not* serve the reigning magnitude of desires is wrong to this axiology - for example, taxes to sustain underlying life support systems which take away money to spend on self inclinations.

3.6.2. Value Theory Based in Fact: Giving Consumers What They Want

Perry's formally argued text is clear that this definition of value is not only binding in principle, but is as indisputable and irreversible as any objective fact.

Perry writes: "When ... value is defined in terms of an interest, than any interest will satisfy the definition: and if I observe that everyone likes, desires, loves or wills a thing, then I am bound by the definition to judge it as good. The evidence of its goodness or badness is the observable fact of interest, which is just as objective ... as any other fact of life or history" (p. 13).

We may recall here that long prior to Perry, Frances Edgeworth, a founder of neoclassical and market theory, locked the desire theory in by the formalized mechanics of mathematical method: "The conception of Man as a pleasure machine", he asserts his *Mathematical Psychics* (1891), "may justify the employment of mechanical terms and mathematical reasoning in social science". And so it has happened.

Perry's theory seems a philosophical justification of this model. Desire, consumer and market utility theories thus neatly coalesce - scientific quantification of desire magnitudes as all value there is. Money then operates as the demand function to excise any desire without money to pay for its object.

3.6.3. How Il-Being Appears as Well-Being

The idea of value as whatever is desired, and most value by desire in greatest magnitude, can thus become a ravenous maw in its nature. Yet set into matrices of

mathematical formulae in maximizing money-capital and commodity growth, only value-adding and no value debits are counted. In this global value calculus, there is no criterion of worth beyond it. Magnitude of desire objects inducing action to get them is the supreme good.

Illustration assists recognition. Reflect on the fossil-fuel vehicle culture pervading the developed and developing worlds - including “Communist China”. What was once moving volumes of fit and non-polluting citizens filling Beijing’s roads with bicycles is displaced by more and more desired motor vehicles, competition to get them, much greater smog and fouled air to breathe, more severe accidents, and so on. Yet all is counted as “economic development and growth”, the limitless good even in a ‘socialist state’. The generic value-system flaw, however, is not conceptualized. Without standards of what better enables life, there is no end of depredation of life support systems by people going after what they want in ever greater volumes of desire objects.

“What the people want” can also be oil-sugar-and-salt foods serving rising plotted demand curves towards multiplied desires as “objective facts of interest like any other”. With no grounding in life capacities and their needs, the problem of active desires in ever greater magnitudes of objects is accepted as a great good of “enhanced welfare” and “growth”. Yet with no life requirement to ground the regulating value calculus, food cycles themselves can pollute environments and malnourish consumers with no value corrective. Until desire objects inducing action are evaluated by more than popular magnitudes of desire for them, such pathogenic consequences are predictable.

3.7. Life-Value versus Desire-Value: The Turning Point of Value Judgment

If action-inducing desire objects are not connected to organic or ecological requirements, the value of all other creatures and human means of life themselves are blinkered out of the value calculus. Thus so far as people live in accordance with desires alone, systemic life morbidities and dysfunctions may follow but not be seen. Value measure by increased objects of desire is blind to the problem in principle.

Since no “harmonization” between desire magnitudes and life requirements themselves is considered, the conflict between them stays invisible to value judgment.

3.7.1. Grounding in Life Value: Paradigm Cases of Objective Value Choice

Desire and interest theorists have been concerned to demystify values and reconnect them to people’s own lives. This is fine so far as it goes. Yet there is also a tendency to assume that any other value ground is authoritarian or transcendental. This does not follow. No invocation of any higher authority is required to recognize that the desire-interest axiology overlooks ultimate values internal to the life and flourishing of individuals as well as social orders.

In truth the most important means of people’s lives can be at risk without any “organism inclining towards them as an object of interest”. Let us step back to a wider reflective space of judgment to recognize the problem. Consider the following value claims:

- i. “Human sacrifice is evil even if everyone, including the sanctified victims, is motivated to continue it.”
- ii. “Van Gogh’s ‘Starry Night’ was of artistic value even if no-one had an active interest in it.”
- iii. “Biological diversity would be of insurmountable value even if nobody desired it”.

According to the desire theory of value, all of these claims must be false by definition because each asserts a basic value which is not inclined towards by any active desire.

3.7.2. The Case of Human Sacrifice

The desire theory of value does not just disagree with the claims above. It rules them out a-priori.

That is to say, the wrongness of homicidal customs, the value of great art that none may have an interest in, and the intrinsic worth of biodiversity people are indifferent to are have no value in principle. The criterion of “magnitude” and “volume” of desires (Perry) and the criterion of “aggregate demand” (market theory) both measure these ultimate values as worthless. Their unifying principle of value is: *The fewer/more who want x, the more/less value x has*. No life coordinates or bearings exist in either’s value metric.

3.7.2.1. It follows, therefore, that it is right for people to be sacrificed if the greater volume of people want stone-age rituals or armed wars, or limitless market growth instead of biodiverse environments. By the principle of desire magnitude and aggregate, they overrule human and ecological life. Not even despoiled environments and patriotic wars can be wrong to such a ruling value system if they are dominantly desired.

3.7.3. No Line Can Be Drawn Against Life-Destructive Desire Volumes

If “the total interest” of a society’s individual members is motor-affectively disposed to such practices, they are therefore good according to this axiology. “People get what they want”. There are no deeper value grounds to appeal to. This way of value can thus exclude the most important and far-reaching values there are. Perry writes that “morality [is]- - harmony of [desire] interests as an ideal goal”(p. 87). Market theory adds, “equilibrium between market supply and demand is the economy’s ideal state”. The two claims are analogous in meaning. Perry, we might say, provides a generic axiology for the capitalist market - although he does not claim this.

In any case, in these or any other variation on this value doctrine, no question arises of the enabling or disabling nature of the desires themselves. They are self-validating.

3.8. Desire Theory Lacks Moral Resources to Rule out Destructive Addictions

Let us now consider, as Perry does, the case of life-degrading addiction, and whether the desire harmonization principle can resolve the problem. Perry argues that “while the (addict’s) craving does invest its object with positive value, the craving may be invested with negative value from the standpoint of *other* interests” (p. 11).

Observe that whether the “addict” must have crack-cocaine, junk food, cigarettes, sugar-caffeine beverages, or violence spectacles is not an issue. As elsewhere, there are no life coordinates in this moral system to rule out destructive desire-objects in dominant volume. How then are dominant addictive desires to be judged wrong? From their construction as addictive to their saturating advocacy to their mass consumption to their systemic ill-being consequences, there no other moral or value criterion than *what people want*.

3.8.1. Equivocating the Meaning of Interests

Perry’s argument for overcoming disabling addictive desires confuses two concepts of “interest” - his own defined meaning of motor-affective impulsion towards something (which impels the addict most of all), and “interest” in the objective sense which he smuggles in here while ignoring it elsewhere - that which is in the desirer’s *life interest*. This conflation of subjective desire and life interest is fallacious, but revealingly representative of the wider ruling thought system.

3.8.2. Internal Contradiction

Yet how could a philosopher imagine that the “other interests” of the addict exist for him as felt motivations sufficiently powerful to overcome the addiction, when it is the very nature of addiction to have no other inclinations so strong as it?

Since weaker felt interests cannot negate stronger ones by definition, the argument fails. Only something higher than motor-affective desires can provide life-coherent direction - namely, a life-grounded principle that regulates *against* motor-effective desires when they are life disabling. This mediating moral principle is, however, absent here and elsewhere.

3.8.3. The Problem Is Insoluble Without Life-Value Criterion

We are thus left with the problem of how the addict is to get out of a desire-object addiction which harms life. Or, more broadly understood, we are left with *the general problem of how any destructive felt interest which is dominant can be over-ruled if affective interest is the sole criterion of worth*.

3.9. The Logic of Moral Disaster: Freedom and Democracy as Multiplied Wants

Any theory of value which is restricted to desire-objects is ultimately faced by a ruinous problem. When desire-objects violate objective organic or life support requirements, there is no life-ground principle to steer them because want objects are the sole values recognized.

3.9.1. Market Democracy Failures Built into Consumer Value Calculus

At the second order level, a “greater volume” of felt interests (or in market theory, “consumer demand”) is the sole standard of deciding what is of worth and how much. If more and more are moved by toxically addictive desires, this problem cannot be

resolved by his measure. It can only be compounded. For ever greater volumes or magnitudes of desires, means ever more value of their aggregate objects. There is in this generic value calculus, therefore, no reason why such quantities of desire objects cannot override the most basic life support necessities for which there is no felt want.

The larger magnitude of consumer wants decides - approximately the notion of “democracy” in this value system. The unseen absurdity of this position is that it has no principle to recognize the worst possible outcome - that larger magnitudes of desires and desire objects may impel actions which cumulatively destroy what is of universal life worth. The issue here is not abstract in nature. It objectively confronts us wherever there is cumulative despoliation of life support systems by this “consumer-production dynamic”.

3.9.2. Despoliation Engenders Desires for Despoliation

What if, moreover, people’s desires for images and instruments of life-annihilation accompany this globally systemic despoliation? These desires too are validated and empowered by the standard of “desire volume” or “consumer demand”. Indeed they carry more weight as values the more intense and numerous they become in activating populations to consume them. Do we not now see these very growing magnitudes of desire objects widely claimed as “globalizing freedom and democracy”?

There is no remedy possible for this problem within the parameters of this value system. When life desire is made destructive by the forms of expression it is conditioned by, the monstrous can occur by a life-unconscious dynamic operating beyond the ken of market and desire theories (as explained in *From the Beast Within to the Master Desire Mechanism* and *Philosophies of the Dark Psyche: Blind Will, the Id, Archetypes and Inner Compulsion*).

3.9.3. The Need to Re-Ground Understanding of What Is Freedom and What is Good

The worst can occur with no life-value check in place. Yet the rule of appetites with no higher value to direct them receives the response, *and so what?* Perry uses these very words (p.13). At the market-capitalist level, the logic of response is similar. “People get what they want”.

How can moral reason find its way out of this quandary? “What people want” may be destroying the conditions of human life, a fatal paradox that is not resolved.

In the light of the history of philosophy, the desire-interest idea of value leads us back to Plato’s prescient allegory of the Cave - where the chains of people’s conditioned desires and images dancing on the wall determine understanding, thereby blocking out the universal forms of the real, the true and the good. Yet without subscribing to Plato’s idea of transcendental forms behind popular appearances, let us directly consider the problem humanity confronts. The moral re-grounding required here is targeted by a simple question: Do desire-objects and actions to get them enable *or* disable life and life systems?

This is the unpenetrated core issue of moral thought.

3.9.3.1. The Life-Blind Value Calculus: Reconciling Values by Counting Wants

In a Perryian or a market value system, the principle that adjudicates among the diverse interests of individuals and groups in society is their aggregated totality. That is, the community's value choice is decided by the majority or unanimous sum of their desires or preferences. The reassuring term for this atomic-preference calculus is "methodological individualism". Since it is recognized that the desire-interests of individuals may lead in different directions, and since the ruling value theory grants legitimacy to each of them, it can only respond to the problem of competing interests by resolving their differences in the aggregated sum of their desires - as with magnitudes of "revealed preferences in the market" or "secret-ballot votes in elections".

3.9.3.2. Whether these magnitudes are only of conditioned or misled desires is not an issue which arises. Preferences are valid in themselves. No deeper criterion of value enters - not of organic need, not of informed choice, not of the common life interest of all. Whether the totalities of desires recognized as decisive by such a value calculus are consistent with universal organic or ecological requirements is, therefore, not a question which can be posed within this framework of value understanding. Rather, idealized models of market equilibrium, harmony of wills, majority rule, and so on are conceived as the only valid guide.

3.9.4. No Common Life-Ground for the Common Interest: From Perry to Rawls

Perry's own general theory of value as well as market theory bypasses these deeper moral issues. But his rhetorical representation makes it appear as if they have been resolved. "Morality is an integration of interests", he says, "in which they are rendered harmonious without losing their identity" (p. 92). Such "harmonization of interests", he continues, is achieved by the "organization of morality" in which wider and wider circles of unified, but still individuated interests are constructed as common interests' (pp. 92-104, 262-64, 377-79). The common interests are, however, unconnected to anything but desire magnitudes whose measure of harmony is only aggregation towards consistency *with each other*. No standard of consistency with life requirements and support systems ever emerges.

People's desire-interests, Perry reasons, must thereby move by a "co-operative process of moral judgment" with no content but *agreement among them* towards an overall "harmonious happiness" which is inferred as the outcome of this procedure: a procedure which he then characterizes as "reflective agreement in the social will" (p. 92).

3.9.5. Perry and Rawls Compared and Contrasted in Absence of Life-Ground

The design of this vision of "reflective agreement in the social will" anticipates the subsequent social theory of Perry's younger Harvard colleague, John Rawls, in the latter's more famous *A Theory of Justice* (1967) which is widely regarded as the leading classic of public and political philosophy of the twentieth century.

Yet it is important to recognize here that Perry's ideal of an ascending "harmonization of interests" is constructed in terms of people's ongoing and changing "motor affective interests". It is not a set of principles of justice which, according to Rawls' very different argument, follow from the rational judgment of abstract individuals choosing from behind a "veil of ignorance" (or screen of impartiality). Rawls thus moves beyond magnitudes of desire impulses as the guiding principle of social moral ordering to rational deduction of first principles and institutions of justice. Yet once again, no organic or support life requirements ever enter his architecture of conception even when he speaks of "primary goods".

3.9.5.1. The Corresponding Exclusion across Different Moral Deciders

The framework of atomic choice without any life-ground *of* it is the unnoted theoretical constant across theories. Rawls' and Perry's ultimately governing principles may, as elsewhere, be very different. Perry's public purpose and will is determined by a magnitude of active desires of individuals coming to cooperative conclusion. Rawls' social will and institutional framework for its implementation is determined by the self-maximizing rationality of anonymous individual agents agreeing to fundamental principles *in abstracto*.

Yet what is in common between them is what is in common across contemporary value and moral theories:

1. An atomic methodology in which collective agency and choice is ruled out in principle;
2. No grounding in or reference to life needs, capacities or support systems; and
3. No life-value criterion whereby to judge what is better or worse.

Accordingly, freedom and democracy can come to mean multiplied individual wants and preferences with no life-value criterion or coherence with life needs and support systems entering into moral understanding.

3.10. Correct Love: From Subjective Desires to Transcendental Ideals

Let us now move to another field of meaning in the received spectrum of moral theories.

The general value theory of Franz Brentano, like that of R.B. Perry's and John Rawls', is distinguished by magisterial system. But in direct contrast to Perry's, Brentano's central work, *The Origin of our Knowledge of Right and Wrong* (1969), proposes standards for value-judgment which foundationally *reject* the subject's inclinations as a guide to what is of worth.

Brentano seeks instead to steer between the Scylla of "metaphysical inventions" (e.g., transcendental Platonic Forms) and the Charybdis of "mere subjectivism" (e.g., ethical hedonism or individualist relativism). He does so by holding the good, in all its types, to be a *correct affirmation of love for an object*:

“We call a thing good when the love relating to it is correct” (Section 24).

The knowledge of its correctness, argues Brentano, is “what experience makes evident to us” (Section 32). It is “a correspondence between a judgment and its object” (Section 23, Note) . Most precisely, it is “certain” in that it is “*contradictory to assert its contrary*”. (Letter to Kraus, March 24, 1904).

3.10.1. A-Priori Good and Bad

As with other general theories of value, Brentano is reluctant to commit his theory to any general claim of what is, *in fact*, good. He does, however, make clear on occasions that he thinks “knowledge” and “high-minded love” qualify as a-priori goods, and that “error” and “envy, jealousy and malice” qualify, conversely, as *a-priori* bads. (Sections 35-36).

3.10.2. Objects of Love and Hate as Akin to a Mathematical Truth

“Loving and Hating”, Section 34, are the primary moral opposition for Brentano. Yet their opposition is not ultimately emotional, but as rational as logical or mathematical truth. That knowledge and malice, for example, are respectively good and bad is conceived by Brentano to be as necessary and as self-evident as $2 + 2 = 4$. It is impossible to assert the contrary without absurdity.

3.10.3. Still the Problem of No Moral Criteria

Yet how do we correctly identify what is “knowledge” or “love” versus “error” and “malice” in any actual case? We may agree they are good and bad respectively by definition, but how do we recognize each in the real world? What are their *criteria*? Brentano provides no answer.

3.11. What We Don’t See: The Common Structure of Moral Blindness

The problem with Brentano’s theory is that there is no guarantee from his characterization of good as “correct love” that goods as opposed to bads will in fact arouse love. There might be goods which we do not love or care about because we are morally blind to them. Or there might be evils we do not see because they are customarily accepted.

The examples stated in Section 3.7.1 above provide examples of goods and bads that may not be recognized at all, let alone loved or hated. Consider another example. To enslave others is not a matter of failing to relate to them with *correct* love, but failing to relate to them at all.

3.11.1. Goods and Bads Made Invisible through Ruling Value Syntax

Brentano might reply it is love which is not correct that is still behind the problem: that is, a love of money or whatever slaves are *used for* - that is the incorrect love we can identify here. Yet how can we tell the wrongness of the more basic love itself? Again,

he does not provide an answer.

More deeply, the explanation he does give does not apply to the most important cases of moral blindness there are which are by no means confined to his theory, but pervasive - *failure to see a good or bad that exists because it is invisible to an accepted way of looking at the world*. Again we confront the insistent problem of how to see and think beyond conventional value sets without some substantive value ground that cannot mislead us.

3.11.2. Unseen Goods and Evils

There are important goods of which people are simply not aware - not because of some incorrect love or desire, but because their conventional outlook *does not see* the value there. But if the goodness of an object depends, as Brentano argues, on “the love *relating to it* [as] correct”, then it follows that an object with *no* love or desire relating to it cannot be good, nor can a bad exist with no hate of or repulsion by it.

The deep problem here is that values to which we have not related to rightly or wrongly, but *not related to at all* by moral emotion are boxed out as value issues - for example, thousands of individual children who invisibly die daily and unnecessarily from preventable disease, or countless species made extinct every year by the unexamined value mechanism of industrial civilization. The want of objective criteria of good and bad beyond what we are conditioned to want thus silently leaves us yet again without any moral compass to recognize where we go wrong without knowing it.

3.11.3. A Value Theory Should Lead Us Where We Are Blind

There are great evils to which most people may have not related one way or the other, and that is the moral problem. Prior to their having a correct or wrong relationship of love or hate to an object, there is no connection to the issue at all. *Moral disconnection from* good and bad realities is, in truth, the greatest value problem of our era. As elsewhere, moral philosophy does not lead us where we are blind.

Since the primary power of any principle of value is to open our eyes to what we have not yet seen, to enable us to recognize the value or disvalue of objects which we are made aware of and guided aright by in its light, then any view which confines us to only to what we are already conscious of fails this life test. It keeps us in the dark.

3.11.4. The Convention of Diversion

Brentano, in admirable philosophical honesty, acknowledges in passing the possibility of this vast omission when he comments “... there is no guarantee that every good thing will arouse in us an emotion that is experienced as being correct. When this does not occur, our criterion fails, in which case the good is absent so far as our knowledge and practical purposes are concerned” (Section 27).

In his note to this passage, he goes further: “One might fear that it [this problem] ... threatens to undermine ethics, if not to demolish it altogether.” He then directs us to a

further note which, however, does not address the problem. Instead, it diverts us to the unconnected issue of “measuring the remote consequences of our actions” (Note 44). As so often occurs at the nub of values inquiry and debate, the ultimate issue of an accustomed moral blindness is avoided by diversion to another issue.

3.11.5. The Core of Human Crises: Life-Blind Value Sets

What does one say of the countless people who do not relate in *any* way to the 1000 million people living on less than a dollar a day, or their unseen suffering children, or the earth’s species disappearing at a thousand times the average evolutionary rate, when it is the accustomed way of looking at the world that blocks out such facts from moral view?

This operation occurs prior to love or hate or desire or even consciousness. The ruling value-set is that through which the facts are screened out. There is almost no philosopher or scientist who is not submerged in some way in this unexplored realm of life-blind presuppositions. The problem of unseen goods and evils is not at all restricted to Brentano’s moral philosophy. It is the great terra incognita of human understanding.

We might refer to this silently regulating structure of assumptions as a “social value program”. It is a vice-like frame of consciousness with many variations on it across cultures and philosophies over millennia. We see its generic syntax at work whenever conventionalised perception and understanding block out the destructive life-consequences that follow from adherence to their presupposed moral order (e.g., that slaves are slaves by nature, that the poor deserve their poverty, that nature’s value is solely as an economic resource, and so on).

At bottom, this may be humanity’s and the world’s profoundest problem across differences of time, language and place - a regulating system of life blindness which is invisible within the community of meaning it governs.

Any moral or value theory that is adequate, in contrast, articulates principles which open us towards what we have been accustomed to blinker out. For this reason most of all, we require a general theory of value whose defining principles lead us to think *beyond* our socially habituated frameworks of valuation. For the blocks of conditioned mind-sets which select out their systemic destructive consequences from view are the most recurrently dangerous set-points of the species.

3.12. Avoiding the Problem: Invalidating Moral Principles as Such

Many people including philosophers are content to leave these value systems to self-destruct because they claim all moral values are merely expressions of irrational feelings and prejudices.

Since the *logical-positivist* turn of the early twentieth century - which adopted modern natural science as its model - many philosophers have claimed that all meaningful statements must be factually verifiable. They have further claimed that all statements which do not meet this criterion are meaningless. While this position is not dominant as

it once was, a more widespread suspicion of moral values has arisen in its place which denies than any claim of a universal, obligatory and overriding moral principle or theory is a merely arbitrary assertion. In consequence, any universal and ultimate value becomes swept into the same ashcan of philosophical disrepute.

3.12.1. The Case of Nicholas Rescher: Values Represent Slogans

There is no better example of this trend than the characterization of values by the eminent contemporary American philosopher, Nicholas Rescher. Amidst an impressive edifice of formalist discussion which strips all substance from value positions, he defines all values as follows:

“A value represents a slogan capable of providing for the rationalization of action by encapsulating a positive attitude toward a purportedly beneficial state of affairs.” (Rescher, *Introduction to Value Theory*, 1969, Chapter 1, Part 6).

3.12.2. Reduction to Absurdity

While this definition may deflate high-minded but empty generalisations like “knowledge” or “love”, it is too narrow and reductionist as a concept of value to enable us to find principles of worth capable of guiding us. That is its point. By reducing all values to derivatives of slogans, Rescher cuts values inquiry off at the neck. His definition rules out all thoughtful or worthwhile values by definition.

Although one might agree that much value proclamation is no more deeply grounded than this formula asserts, it is a reductionist abuse of the concept to define *all* values as such. Good can no longer be told from evil because the very notions are, according to the definition, no more than stand-ins for slogans: and so values can be anything at all with no way to tell between them. One cannot go *beyond* slogans and rationalizations because that is what values are confined to.

Rescher’s caricature definition leads to logical absurdity. For by its criterion, the classic search for and choosing of values is made a-priori impossible. Consider, for example, the *existentialist* ethic. It precisely requires that each individual takes responsibility for any value s/he lives by, and so contradicts Rescher’s criterion in principle. According to it, existentialist values cannot exist.

3.12.3. To Rule Out Value Substance: The Hidden Function of Logical Formalism:

No reason is given by Rescher to support his view. Yet something like this meta-position - values only represent slogans to rationalize claims of good - is familiar in the pervasive world of contemporary marketing. Rescher never mentions this connection, but his defining formula rules out values from being anything more. What it adds are sequences of formal notations to validate this definition as a formal given.

As we saw in “*The Global Crisis of Values*”, there are numerous ways in which the relativization and de-grounding of all values clears the field of any claimant to value other than the reigning value system - de-valuing all but it. Thus, as here, any value that

does *not* reduce to “representing a slogan” is excised from meaning.

3.12.4. Devices of Obfuscation

There is another, internal problem. The assertion that values “*represent slogans*” leaves unanswered the question as to what these slogans *themselves* represent. We would normally think that slogans represent values, not the other way round. Yet here the reverse is built into Rescher’s definition itself. The loss of normal bearings his definition induces is perhaps deliberate. As elsewhere, obfuscation can conceal shallowness of conception. As to what the slogans *do* represent for Rescher, this elementary question is foreclosed by diversion to pages of notations with any deeper meaning thereby closed out. As in much applauded philosophy over eras, empty formalism serves a function of precluding value substance from discussion.

3.12.5. From Positivism to Emotivism: Silencing of Values by Invalidating Them

At this stage, students of value may wonder how such built-in avoidance of substantive values is achieved without notice. Certainly many readers may be awed by sequences of formal symbols they cannot decipher, as in mathematical economics. Revealingly, this has been the dominant trend of symbolic logic and economics over the last century.

Another form of de-basing values is to argue that moral values are merely expressions of emotions. Here Good is equated to an emotional affirmation like “Yay!”, whereas Bad is reduced to the converse of “Boo!”. This is the essential reduction of the moral philosophy of “*emotivism*”. Moral values are reduced to feelings with no cognitive meaning - hence the alternative name of “moral non-cognitivism”.

If we examine the logical construction of these positions, we observe that an invalidation of moral values is built into them a-priori. Since the slogan or emotion is prior to the value, and since, moreover, values only express a “slogan” or “emotion”; then the implication is that moral values are mindless. It therefore follows that no moral value can be really binding on rational beings - except those prescribed by the ruling value system that is presupposed and unexamined.

3.12.6. The Moral Box: Ruling Values are Facts, Other Values Are Emotions

In the world outside moral philosophy, a similar discrediting of moral positions outside the ruling order is similarly dismissed - as “merely emotional” or “slogan-chanting”.

The reigning moral regime itself is all the while presupposed as given like the laws of physics on which none can rationally impose value judgments.

3.13. Ruling out Objective Values by Definition: The Life-Ground Counter-Argument

In Z. Nadjer’s *Values and Valuations* (1975), Nadjer defines values more positively as “*stable, conscious determinants of action*”, which “*canalize motivation*”(p. 10) Something cannot qualify as a value, this criterion correctly implies, if it is merely a

whim, or if it is unconscious, or if it does not direct motivation.

Although Nadjer seems to have captured what value is considered from the standpoint of a subject who has a value, he does not recognize what this criterion rules out a-priori - objective values which obtain independently of anyone's recognition of them, like the objective life value of the earth's atmosphere.

Yet the last century of philosophy and science has implicitly agreed with Nadjer. Objective values do not exist. Ultimate and universal values like terrestrial life support systems are unseen as values. The consequence is that what is in fact most valuable to us as objective value is excluded with no philosophical notice of the exclusion, nor of the moral choice to sustain or ignore the ultimate value ground.

3.13.1. Objective Values As Self-Evident But Unseen

The analysis of this monograph explains, in contrast, that all true values are objective insofar as they enable life capacities rather disable them in fact - for example, the objective value of breathable rather than unbreathable air. Although we may blinker out such objective values and deplete them without recognizing it, this blindness to objective values does not mean they do not exist.

3.13.2. The Recurrent Error: Values Assumed Dependent on Consciousness of Them

Nadjer also rules out the possibility that a value can exist whether or not it has become for anyone a "conscious determinant of action." Yet the ozone layer remains clearly of value whether or not it is a determinant of anyone's actions.

Nadjer provides no argument why he does not include such values, nor do other moral and value theories. Typically of the age we live in, it is assumed that there cannot be values independent of people's preferring them. Subjective values - the desires or preferences of individuals with or without any other basis - tend to be all that the dominant theories conceive. It follows that the objective values of life support systems can be drawn down, degraded and despoiled by the ruling value system with no destruction of objective values perceived. Such subjectivization of values is the most general way in which objective life needs and support systems have been blinkered out over a century.

3.13.3. Ultimate Values Can Be This-Worldly and Life-Based

The inherited mistake has been to think that the assertion of objective value posits a *non-natural* ground of it. The opposite is true. One need not believe in a supernatural God or a disembodied Realm of Forms or any other immaterial entities to recognize that life and its conditions of existence are ultimate, objective and universal values on earth. Once we recognize this is so, we are able to see that denial of these ultimate and objective values by subjectivist presupposition is not scientific or rational. Rather it follows from a debased first premise.

3.13.4. Preferential Rankings of Experiences versus Valuing Them Prior to Comparison

In polar contrast, the dominant idea of values is that they are subjectivist, agent-relative and particular - as in consumer preferences. Thus Nadjer adopts without argument an idea formalized by economic utility theory: (emphasis added): The “experience of evaluation is always a preferential ranking of our experience” (p.9).

3.13.4.1. Consider, in contrast to this approach, the deeper and opposite view of intrinsic value adapted from Max Scheler (1874-1928): “The inferior awareness values in and through comparison. The superior awareness values prior to comparison”.

Rank-grading, however, has become a dominant yardstick in everything - commodities, academic candidates, ball teams, beauty pageants, public problems, whatever. But rank-grading shuts out all that is “*beyond* comparison” - that is, most of life value.

3.13.4.2. When epiphany opens the mind to the feeling of “here, now, always”, the experience cannot be ranked in comparison to others. That is its nature. Intrinsic value is lost when it is reduced to fit a rank-order frame. We may explain the matter more directly still. Breath may be the primordial value of being alive, but to rank our breaths would be insane.

3.13.4.3. As preference-ranking value metrics dominate the world of value, values of all kinds are made to pass through a form of price-rating that expels whatever value cannot be so quantified. The entire realm of value can in this way be silently reduced to what conforms to the dominant unit of measurement, and all intrinsic value thus expunged.

When the worth of philosophies, arts, research papers and so on come to be determined by rank-preference regimes, what cannot be fitted into the rank ordering is excluded without notice. What is the alternative? The alternative is to value in terms of the life-value metric of worth which is spelled out in depth from *The Primary Action and the Life-value Compass* on.

3.13.5. The Unseen Freedom of Intrinsic Value

Intrinsic value is illustrated well in the Ch’an and Zen Buddhist tradition. Here the most apparently routine objects are valued as expressions of “the Buddha-nature”, that is, ultimate intrinsic values - by precisely ridding the mind of all schemas of categorization and comparison. This is a tradition which dates from the 2500-year-old *Upanishads* of India and the *Tao-te Ching* by Lao Tzu of China.

In its Mahayana Buddhist form issuing in Zen, this thought tradition claims that only by such a cleansing of the categories of judgment mediating the fullness of direct experience is any “awakened” understanding of what is of true worth possible.

We may observe here a profound contradiction of standpoints. What preference-ranking

theorists in economics and philosophy assume to be the only scientific structure of value and evaluation, philosophical traditions from the world's oldest civilizations identify as the major mind-block to higher value comprehension. Revealingly, no preference-ranking theory or practice acknowledges awareness of this classic view, nor meets its arguments.

3.13.6. The Formal Requirements of Any Axiology

At the most abstract level, Nadjer provides an excellent formal definition of an axiological system: "M is an axiological value if and only if M is a judgment, ascribing the quality of valuableness to objects, properties or states of affairs, and constituting within the given value-system a final justification of other judgments of the system" (pp. 63-4).

This description concisely states the formal requirements of a general value theory which the life-value system explained ahead fulfils. Yet the criterion here does not propose any actual principle of value. It remains, typically, indifferent to substantive value. Thus any kind of value system qualifies as well as any other - for example, a master-race doctrine as much as an egalitarian ethic. Nadjer - typically of value theorists - provides no ultimate standard *of* value to rank value systems themselves.

3.14. Towards Value System Re-Grounding: The Needs Criterion of Value

As we have seen by prior analysis, value theory across domains suffers from a methodological delinkage from life value, and so an incapacity to recognize what really matters to terrestrial humanity. In theory as in reality, this is the world crisis of values.

What appears to resolve this problem of life blindness is the *need criterion of value*. As Rollo Handy straightforwardly puts it in *Value Theory and the Behavioral Sciences* (1969), "A value is what satisfies a need". For example, food on the table is a value because it satisfies the family's need, but silver spoons are not - unless one believes, like market economists, that people may legitimately enjoy non-needed things because others cannot have them. This is what we may call reverse envy.

Value = what satisfies a need rules out such values, and indeed unneeded goods in general. Yet a primary problem arises immediately which has long stumped value theorists. What is the criterion of a need which applies across different individuals and cultures?

3.14.1. No Sound Criterion of Need in the Literatures

While economic textbooks copiously refer to "needs and wants", these are nowhere distinguished and are falsely equated to market demand. On the other hand, when "basic needs" are invoked in other literatures from non-governmental agencies to children's law, no criterion is provided. Philosophers who are more concerned about the meanings of basic concepts fail to distinguish needs and desires from Plato through Kant to Habermas.

In fact, we will not find a sound criterion of need before McMurtry (1978) - who proposes it as a way of understanding Marx which is not found in Marx's texts. Only with Noonan's *Democratic Society and Human Needs* (2006), which moves on the basis of this criterion's formulation in *Unequal Freedoms* (1998), do we find a criterion of need applicable across times and situations. Otherwise, no universalizable criterion exists, including in the analysis of Doyal and Gough's specific study of the matter, *A Theory of Human Need* (1991).

In short, the long and standard problem with a needs concept of value has been that there is no sound criterion of what a human need *is*. What some say is a need, others say is only a desire, and so on. Most fundamentally the accepted view has been that no concept of need is valid across individual or cultural differences. Indeed there is a contemporary suspicion that to assert needs as distinguished from desires or wants presupposes an authoritarian God's-view standpoint.

3.14.2. Market Demand Substitutes for Life Need

On the level of global market reality, however, a money proxy for need *already* rules - market demand, or what people are willing to pay and have the money to do it. Where in the past people hardly doubted that known means of life must be provided for needs to be met, a multi-planed transformation of the human condition has disposed of the needs anchor by:

- (1) An industrial proliferation of artificial commodities which is authoritatively believed to provide equivalents to organic means of life;
- (2) An emergent post-industrial world of virtual reality in which images mediate or substitute for life necessity; and
- (3) An intellectual convention to dismiss the issue as unsophisticated or monocratic.

Within this decoupling from the life-ground across continents, a system shift has locked in a substitute ruling equation: need = market demand.

3.14.3. The Long-Missing and Ultimate Criterion of Need

Suppose, however, we set aside this currently ruling set-point of value, and understand needs as all that enables the being which has them to organically reproduce and function: and, therefore, what is of primary value to them whether they are aware of it or not. Yet in identifying this baseline of objective value, we must meet three problems:

- i. To distinguish needs from mere wants and habits;
- ii. To rule out the ambiguities characteristic of received definitions, and most difficult
- iii. To provide a criterion which clearly applies across cultures.

3.14.3.1. The logical demand is, most simply put, to ensure that any such criterion of need is neither too broad nor too narrow - a long missing link in the world's economic, social scientific and philosophical literatures. We can, however, fill this gap with a principled definition which cannot be dismissed in the usual stock ways as "authoritarian", "ambiguous", "inapplicable to different cultures", and so on. The

missing criterion with which all can agree is satisfied by the simple formula: *x is a need if and only if, and to the extent that, deprivation of x regularly results in reduction of organic capacity*. This criterion satisfies the requirements of (i), (ii) and (iii) above.

3.14.3.2. Degrees of Necessity and Instrumental Needs

As the crucial measuring concept of “to the extent that” in this formula indicates, needs admit of *degrees of necessity*. A need object is more or less necessary to the extent that its deprivation lowers the life capacities of its bearer. For example, the need for potable water is greater than the need for vegetable greens because the loss of life capacities without potable water is far greater in disabling effect. As well, degrees of deprivation and necessity obtain *within* the same needs as well as among them - the more deprivation, the more reduction of life capacities.

In contrast, the need for a motor vehicle does not exist - although life needs may require one instrumentally in specific circumstances. The motor vehicle is a paradigm example of what may be instrumental to need satisfaction in some cases, but on the other hand may also violate life needs (e.g., by the air, noise and climate pollution of increasing millions needlessly driving motor vehicles).

Yet the failure to distinguish degrees of necessity of needs, needs from their instruments, and even needs from their violators is pervasive in the global market. A different confusion has to do with conflating the *direct satisfiers* of a need (which vary radically) with the *need itself* for nutritious food (which does not vary). For example, some may satisfy the need for protein in the form of fish and beans, others by protein in meat and dairy products, and still others by vegetables and fruits only, with still further variations among these ways of getting protein. The variations are limitless. But differences in ways of meeting a need do not mean differences in the need, as Doyle and Gough emphasize in their study, *A Theory of Human Need* (1991).

Yet these authors nowhere penetrate the universal principle of needs, and no complete set of human needs is identified by them or anyone else. This is why the complete set of these universal human needs is spelled out ahead in the next section. Each and all satisfy the need criterion - that without which life capacity is reduced. Together they constitute a baseline of human values across cultures. As *Philosophy and World Problems* explains in the previous and following essay sections, morality and justice have an underlying common ground in meeting these needs, and are more or less advanced to the extent that they do so.

3.14.4. The Need-Blind Social Order

The meaning of need is undeniable once defined. Yet needs are systematically disconnected from by existing regulators of individual and social life, with predictable pathogenic consequences. Global market commodities and their methods of production, for example, degrade organic and life support systems. Yet as observation shows, people may come to value the production and consumption of fossil-fuel vehicles more

than the air all breathe, with rising public subsidies to sustain and increase their world sales and use.

When life-blindness is thus built into a ruling value mechanism, *necessity means serving its demands rather than the needs of life itself*. The dominant axiology of a social system can in this way order the choice spaces of individuals so as to destroy the very conditions of their existence. With not even academic distinction between life and system necessities, this value derangement deepens beneath moral recognition and scientific correction.

3.14.5. Meeting Needs Required for Life Capacities to Function

Deprived of need fulfillment, whether by social circumstance or value confusion, flourishing human being is not possible. The same is true *mutatis mutandis* of other species. The consequences of need deprivation are always reductions of life abilities to function. This is why any social order is rationally steered by its performance in providing for the life needs of its members. Yet it cannot be so steered when life need-object provision is supplanted by commodity sales which are indifferent to whether citizens' life capacities are enabled or not.

Provision for needs to enable life capacities may be the unrecognized baseline of all human freedom, but this life-ground of liberty is screened out by a ruling value system which assumes that people's lives are better and freer by more commodities produced for their wants even if life means and conditions are thereby degraded. The value-system disorder is compounded as ever more growth of these profitable commodities is steered for by public policies and subsidies.

3.15. Going Deeper: Understanding the Truth and the Limits of a Needs Theory of Value

Yet another issue arises needs to be raised which puts the needs theory of value into question. What of beauty in itself and the freedom to create and behold it beyond need satisfaction? Is this not the most important of freedoms, and does not its experience occur beyond the realm of need?

3.15.1. Beauty Too A Need at the Contextual Level?

Needs theory may reply that beauty is itself a human need. Imagine how we would feel and function in a world without any artistic design or any flourishing green spaces around us - beauty in an enviroing sense. Without this, needs theory might claim, human life capacities are deprived and blunted.

3.15.2. The Criterion of Need Universal Across Peoples and Species

Another profound explanatory power of the need criterion of value is that it is not as other general concepts of value limited by an underlying bias towards one *species* of life, the human. It does not bracket out nonhuman beings. They too clearly have life needs, and deserve moral recognition to the extent of their suffering from deprivation of

them. Thus a needs theory of value does not commit the error of moral “speciesism”.

Applicability of the need-value equation works within the human species as well as across other species. The italicized criterion of need is not culture-bound or ethnocentric in the way that, say, claimed needs to private property right, trade and barter, or sexual monogamy are. It rules out cultural bias in principle. In such ways, the need-value criterion is sufficiently rich to comprehend objective worth across societies as well as species. All people need these life means, but not in this or that one-right-way of fulfillment. At the same time, this criterion of need is precise enough to rule out all false claims to it - that is, any claim of need where life-capacity reduction does not occur without the claimed need object.

3.15.3. The Need Equations: What Progressive Philosophies and Deep Ecology Lack

While some progressive and environmental philosophies such as deep ecology have properly recognized that (in Arne Naess’s words) “humans have no right to reduce the richness and diversity of life forms except to satisfy vital needs”, no criterion of “vital needs” is provided to draw this ultimate line of value. Here too, the life-ground principle of need resolves this problem. It does so by two defining value equations:

- (1) *Whatever life capacity is reduced without = a need ;*
- (2) *The necessity of the need object = the reduction of life capacity by its deprivation.*

Testing reflection will confirm these formal equations of need, and their universal applicability. Thus applying these value equations to an ecosystem, we are always able to judge what is a need or necessity for it, and what is not. Any ecosystem, for example, requires the species who are interconnected by it in their reproduction and distribution to be preserved in this habitat and their life-carrying capacity through time. The equations explain exactly why; and the life-range loss by violating this need provides the measure.

We may observe in general how *need triangulates with life capacity and value*. Needs are what requires necessary means of life. Life capacities are what need fulfillment alone enables. And ultimate values are the ranges of life capacity which are thereby made possible and realized.

3.15.4. Re-Grounding Our Value Bearings

We may now see why for a life-need criterion of value, the major objects of assumed value in our era - technology, money and commodities - are at best *instrumental* to the satisfaction of life needs, with each’s life value proportionate to the extent to which life capacities are reduced without it. This measure sorts out many confusions which bedevil the world.

Since a primary and profound problem of industrial capitalist civilization is precisely the problem of overriding the needs of people and planetary life-organization to serve *its* demands, needs theory restores value sovereignty to what enables life. By its basic

standard, for example, we are able to judge exactly why and how, and to what extent, such phenomena as mass disemployment and natural resource looting are objectively evil, and why only a life coherent moral calculus can consistently explain and meet such problems.

3.16. Values beyond Need Objects: Bridging the Spiritual-Material Division

Though a needs theory of value may seem to be our answer in the search for a unifying theory of value, it falls short in its capacity to embrace *all* that is of life value.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and others have argued, for example, that aesthetic value is by its nature free from and above the demands of need: “A judgment on beauty in which the slightest interest mingles is highly partisan and not a pure judgment of taste”, says Kant in the First Moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful in his *Critique of Judgment*.

3.16.1. Intrinsic Values beyond Needs

Yet if we reject Kant’s dichotomization of material motive and art, and recognize that an object can be both needed *and* beautiful, this problem seems resolved. Yet even in the light of this value conjunction, beauty *beyond* any necessity still has great and ultimate intrinsic value.

Beauty’s opening of perception and consciousness to new fields of awareness and enjoyment is intrinsic value in itself independently of meeting an organic need. The need criterion of all value is in this way too narrow. It misses values whose absence do not reduce life capacities, but delight and awe human sensibility beyond organic requirement.

When one considers the matter in the light of our full lives where much that we value most is not needed - not just non-functional art, but our free play of imagination, our laughing with others, and our enjoyment of life expression in other beings - the scope of life values that seems missed by a needs theory of worth is surprisingly wide and deep.

3.16.2. Self-Chosen Values against Needs

We might go further and say that some important values can be values *even if they work against the satisfaction of needs*, for example, self-denial of food for transcendental experience. Values in these cases cannot be understood to be in meeting needs. Need satisfaction may always be at *some* stage necessary - we can have no higher values if we are dead which we will soon be if our life needs are not met. Yet important values may not meet any need, and may even be of value despite reducing the satisfaction of needs.

3.16.3. Choosing Need Deprivation for Ascetic Illumination

People often talk of the great value of “being deprived”, “going without”, “learning what it’s like to be hungry”, and so on. Ascetic regimes of fasting and isolation are famous in the history of humanity - especially in the great traditions of Vedanta *sadhus*, Buddhist mendicants and the desert founders of Christianity - and all are valued for

their occasioning of some purifying insight or self-emancipation. This is the realm of asceticism or ascetic values.

We do not need to agree with the claims of these experiences or their ultimate meaning to recognize there may be real value to them. It would be shallow to think there was no important value from deliberate self-deprivation of need objects when it has been a principal context of the emergence of the *Upanisads*, Shakyamuni's revelation, the teachings of Yeshua, and arguably the greatest powers of value insight which humanity has attained by renouncing for a while the most basic demands of human needs.

It is not necessary here to endorse the perversions which have often been performed in the name of "self-purification" to recognize that temporary renunciation of the deepest claims of the self, one's vital needs, may open consciousness to a wider realm of "spirit" beyond self.

3.16.4. The Field of Spiritual Value

The field of spiritual value is not to be dismissed as a delusional realm as scientific naturalists may hold (e.g., the Carvaka of India or mind-brain identity theorists today); *nor* is it to be accepted in the standard way as a separate ontological reality which is unaffected by the world of organic life-organization, as idealist philosophies have held from Plato on.

The realm of spirit is understood in this investigation as grounded in life support systems, but, nonetheless, a limitless value field in itself which may open to profound connections and truths normally missed in attachment to embodied routines.

3.16.4.1. Deprivation Can Open to the Boundless Field of the Divine

Consider long deprivations of what one needs as moments that "make one more aware" or "deepen one's sense of life". These values may in the future make for still better need satisfaction, but their deeper value does not consist in this effect. The new breadth and depth of experience which may open is a value in itself for which need deprivation can be the means. Here again we verge towards the realm of more comprehensive consciousness which is not only of ultimate intrinsic value, but moves inner life towards that boundless thought-field called "spirit", "God", "atman", or "non-being" in religious philosophies across continents.

3.16.5. Life-Value Resolution of Spiritual-Material Conflict

If a naturalistic concept of value grounded in our needs is not adequate to the full scope of values we may be guided by, does this mean that a needs theory of value is, after all, *not* "the baseline of value in the human condition"?

This conclusion does not follow once we recall the axiomatic criterion of need. A need is whatever one cannot be deprived of without a reduction of life capacity. Ascetic self-denial in the case of Buddha and Jesus, for example, does not reduce their life capacities, but, on the contrary, seems to have increased them. So too indigenous people

may variously deprive themselves to open their experience to new experiences of bio-regional or cosmic attunement. There is no unresolvable conflict between ascetic and spiritual values, on the one hand, and life-need values on the other. They are in a dynamic relationship of compossibility, not a duality of opposed value realms.

Where materialist and aesthetic-spiritual meanings conflict, however - as they do without ultimate coherence of life requirements with visionary seeking - life-value theory opposes the need denial. Yet perhaps experience of deprivation of normally needed goods can *itself* qualify as a need insofar as one's life capacities are reduced without experiencing such trials of life. Always however, the value decider is what enables life through time.

3.17. Overcoming Death: Ethical Idealism and the Lost Life-Ground

In fact, most traditional value theories never get as far as considering the objects of life needs as values. Rather they fail to distinguish needs from appetites and desires, and, in major forms of Platonic and religious idealism, *reject embodied life itself as inferior*. No strain of thought is more prominent in philosophies across the ages.

On the other hand, there is a deep internal tension within these philosophies. For the embodied realm is also conceived as “the body of God”, “the object of loving care of Buddha-consciousness”, or the like. Plato's Allegory of the Cave reposes on a transcendental realm of Pure Forms, but calls for the enlightened man who has seen the light of the Good - of which the sun is “the visible form” - to go back into the worldly Cave where men are chained by their conditioning to teach them understanding of these unseen ideals of the real, the true and the good.

The problem arises where what is thought to be objective ideals are delinked from organic life. The “higher realm” of idealist thought is thought to be beyond the reach of space, time, and death itself. This is its ultimate attraction - the eternity of pure thought disconnected from its this-worldly conditions. At bottom, overcoming the limits of death is the moving concern across these philosophies and religions. Death from ripeness of being to enable more embodied life is not yet clarified as the unseen covenant on which life depends on - an ultimate issue to which we will return.

3.17.1. The Contemporary Platonism of Nicolai Hartmann

Rather, idealism and materialism stay alienated in separated spheres. A well known contemporary advocate of an idealist axiology is the neo-Platonist Nicolai Hartmann in his monumental study, *Ethics* (1950).

Hartmann's regulating idea of value throughout is that ethical truth is an “objective, self-existent necessity” - “like a mathematical truth” - which people, in accordance with their varying “talentedness” and “maturity” are able to apprehend in an “ethical ideal sphere.” “Values do not change”, he says in Volume I in rejoinder to the value relativism all around us. It is “only our insight into them that changes.”(p.52)

3.17.2. Mathematical and Other Pure Forms Abstract Away Life-Values

Hartmann's objective idealism will not be challenged for its claim of *objective* value ie., value independent of people's recognition of it. Objective values exist as we have seen, but not in the form of symbolic equations. The mathematical model for objective and universal moral truths is life-emptied. Consider the most basic experience of value there is - feeling one's being as vitally alive, a value expressed poetically and powerfully by such poets and novelists as Walt Whitman, Nikos Kazantzakis and Dylan Thomas. A mathematical model of moral truth cannot in principle capture this life value.

Although the manifold of sentience of the felt side of being - the sights of one's eyes, for example - are perhaps the greatest of all values we can experience, no purely ideal form can even identify them.

3.17.3. Eternal Ideas and Mutable Life: The Implicit Contradiction

This consequence does not trouble strong ethical idealism. Since Nagarjuna and Sankara in the East and Plato in the West, disembodied existence has been long aspired to. One may as well be dead, it may be replied. And indeed these philosophies imply this value preference - an ultimate freedom from the limits and travails of life in a realm of "pure ideal forms", "number holding sway over the flux" or "consciousness with no object". Yet insofar as an idealist value system holds only to the permanent and eternal, rejecting embodied life because it is mutable and therefore imperfect and mortal, it rejects by implication the value of life itself.

3.17.4. Does Love of the Eternal Imply Love of Death?

When demand for the eternal rules out affirmation of the changing, life is thereby downgraded to inferior status, and so only what is lifeless can be ultimately valued. Not even God can be a process of becoming - or so received religions teach. In philosophy, ultimate ideals and concepts are relocated to a realm of eternal truths insensitive to the facts of life.

Such philosophy might therefore be rejected as life-escapist. Thus idealists like Plato's Socrates yearn for release from the inferior world. This is why Nietzsche condemns such philosophy as "decadent" and such philosophers as "lovers of death". Nietzsche, as we have seen in prior sections, goes to the opposite extreme of affirming life as inherently brutal and predatory. Yet this opposite extreme is just as closed to human life's higher possibilities as life-denying religions. In reality, humanity defines itself by the rules it lives by. What is little recognized is that these rules can express eternal principles, and so cross the believed abyss between the eternal and mutable - again a basic theme to which this study will return in the next sections.

3.17.5. The Rope over the Abyss: The Inclusive Concept of the Life Process

A famous Taoist saying of Chuang Tzu, subsequently appropriated by the Cha'an Buddhists, is that "The Tao lies in the excrement and urine".

What is meant by this is that the Tao, the Way of Life, is all-pervasive and functions even in the waste products of our lives which we normally reject as disgusting. They are valuable because they are not needed by and would poison the life-host if not recycled to their proper function of nourishing other life.

Needless to say, the *value* of excrement cannot be apprehended in an ethical ideal sphere. The more intransigently earthy and mutable life's processes are, the more absolutely a dualist idealism repels it. In the life-value onto-axiology, in contrast, the eternal and the mutable are not opposed. The principle of life coherence crosses their divide. Whatever eternal idea enables life forms the bridge over the abyss - for example, the primary laws of thermodynamics or, in matters of moral ideal, the eternal principle of life need itself. Against the one-sidedness of materialism or idealism, the inclusive concept of the life process comprehends both sides.

3.17.6. *Lebenswelt* without Life-Ground

Philosophy, however, has long blinkered out the life-ground. For example, even the philosophical concept of “the life-world” itself, or in its German original, *Lebenswelt*, does not refer to the world of organic processes and their support systems. It blinkers them out. With Edmond Husserl (1859-1938), the life-world it refers to the phenomena of unproblematic experience, with no life-ground of it. With Jürgen Habermas (1929-), it refers only to the “background knowledge” of a linguistic group. Both assume this meaning as given.

Thus even when “the life-world” appears at last to enter the philosophical conversation in the twentieth century, it is emptied of material life substance. Life support systems do not exist even as a philosophical referent. Contemporary Western philosophy is certainly not alone in this disconnection. Philosophers across civilizations have typically come to dwell inside their symbolic worlds as ends-in-selves, lost in their own constructions and no longer in touch with their underlying life support systems. Moral philosophy's natural vocation has in such ways been lost, but finds its missing foundations in life-value onto-axiology.

Glossary

Agent-relative:	A standard philosophical term signifying individual choice as in “agent-relative ethics” which assumes that value agency is restricted to individual persons.
Anti-foundationalism:	A generic term for the dominant trend of philosophy over the recent century embracing many contemporary philosophers and schools of thought whose unifying characteristic is denial of any universal necessities of truth or value.
Axiology:	From the Greek, axioma, “what is thought to be worthy”, the ultimate, but under-theorized category of value reason, ideally building from rationally self-evident bases or axioms of value a complete system of value (aesthetic, epistemological, moral, etc.) with unlimited validity across domains. Onto-axiology is axiology which grounds in the nature of being.

- Capital:** Wealth that can be used to produce more wealth without loss by consumption or waste.
- Capitalism:** A socioeconomic system in which all values are conceived in money terms and maximum sale of commodities for maximum private profit is the ultimate governor of thought and action. (Strictly speaking, the adjective money before capitalism is required to ensure distinction from other forms of capital).
- Civil commons:** A unifying concept to designate social constructs which enable universal access to life goods. Life support systems are civil commons so far as society protects and enables their reproduction and provision for all members.
- Coherence Principle:** see Life Coherence Principle
- Collective agency:** A concept which is little understood in philosophy and the social sciences which dominantly focus on, respectively, agent-relative methods of analysis or aggregates of individual choices. It is best understood by the rule systems people (s) make or follow as societies - the ultimate and ongoing choice process of societies which govern the lives of all, but are normally presupposed as given and taboo to challenge.
- Common life interest:** A concept which disambiguates the categories of “the common interest”, “the public interest”, and so on to specify what these concepts normally omit, the shared life support systems of all.
- Consequentialism:** Often equated to utilitarianism, but strictly holding that the good or bad is to be found in its consequences, not its principle of action or intention.
- Deep ecology:** A movement founded by Arne Naess whose leading ideas against environmental resourcism are that “the well-being and flourishing of non-human life have value in themselves independent of their usefulness for human purposes” and “humans have no right to reduce the richness and diversity of life forms except to satisfy vital needs”. Because Naess leaves the concept of vital needs “deliberately vague”, there is no criterial resource to draw the ultimate line of moral decision regarding human interaction with other species and the environment.
- Deontological ethics:** Essentially, “duty ethics”, standardly opposed to utilitarianism insofar as it holds that good lies in the principle or duty which action embodies, not its consequences of happiness
- Desire theory of value:** A concept to designate any theory of value which conceives all values in terms of individual desire objects.
- Determinism:** A problematic term typically counterposed to freedom of choice but better understood to mean the delimiting of a range of material possibility within which individual or collective choices must occur.
- Development:** A central term of value in contemporary global discourse which does not distinguish between opposed forms of development or growth - for example, more commodities sold for profit (market development/growth) and more means of life available for

Either-or reduction:	<p>people’s lives (human development/growth).</p> <p>A regulating structure of normative thinking which assumes the logical form of p or not-p (“the excluded middle”), thereby eliminating the range of other value possibilities, including degrees of each in mutual inclusion - for example, assuming that a society is either capitalist or socialist, that an ethic is either consequentialist or deontological, or that a phenomenon is either good or bad..</p>
Epistemology:	<p>A central field of philosophy concerned with the nature, grounds and limits of knowledge a generally unrecognized realm of value judgment and theory insofar as judgments rest on elective norms of “true” and “false” and “valid” and “invalid”.</p>
Ethics:	<p>One of the three recognized basic areas of philosophy that which is concerned with what is good and bad in human action, including competing positions of utilitarianism, deontological/formalist/duty ethics, emotivism/non-cognitivism, evolutionary ethics, intuitionism, naturalism, perfectionism, phenomenological ethics, postmodern ethics, subjectivism/pluralism/relativism, self-realization/teleological ethics, and virtue ethics. Perhaps the most enduring received meta-ethical debate is between consequentialism (judging by consequences, e.g., utilitarianism) and non-consequentialism (judging by the intrinsic principle of judgment and action e.g., Platonism and Kantianism). Moral philosophy is often equated to Ethics, but is in principle more restricted in reference to ought-to statements which entail prescriptions or prohibitions whose violation is thought to deserve guilt or punishment.</p>
Existentialism:	<p>Classically defined by Jean-Paul Sartre as “existence precedes essence”, which means that human choice of what one does (existence) precedes any set fate, determinism, role or external design (essence) ruling out this choice, with those denying their responsibility of choice as guilty of “bad faith” (mauvais fois).</p>
Globalization:	<p>A concept which admits of many different meanings but whose dominant meaning is globalization of capitalism. See Capitalism.</p>
Intrinsic and instrumental value:	<p>What is good in itself versus what is good only as a means.</p>
Life coherence principle:	<p>Equivalent to ‘the full coherence principle’ whereby rationality or validity must be consistent with (1) factual premises and (2) valid inferences, so as (3) to enable rather than disable life and life-systems to qualify as rational or valid.</p>
Life sequence of value:	<p>The process whereby any body of life becomes more life by means of life a process which admits of regressive, reproductive and progressive modes and degrees, each measurable by the criteria of more/less fields of life enabled or enjoyed through time.</p>
Life standards:	<p>Those principles and laws which protect and enable human and ecological life systems.</p>

- Life-blind norms:** A characteristic tendency of the ruling value systems of established societies and their received ideologies to blinker out the life-disabling effects of their regulating principles.
- Life-Ground:** Most simply expressed, all the conditions required to take your next breath. Axiologically understood, all the life support systems required for human life to reproduce or develop. The life-ground is to be distinguished from the concept of “the life-world” which refers to background beliefs.
- Life-unconscious:** The life-unconscious arises out of life desires being conditioned to repressive forms – for example, the desire for oneness with life conditioned to be a craving for a power-machine vehicle dominating nature. See Bernays, Edward W. in Bibliography.
- Life-value metric:** more/less life range in any domain or degrees of life function or expression.
- Life-value ontology:** General term for a value-system which regards life and means of life to more coherently comprehensive ranges of life as the sole real good, including the life support systems required to enable this process.
- Life-world:** See Life-Ground
- Linguistic idealism:** The dominant tendency of philosophy to decouple language from its referents within autonomous and self-referential discourses.
- Linguistic turn:** Major philosophical movement of the twentieth century associated with the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, but moving far beyond Wittgenstein and his school in its influence (e.g., anti-foundationalism, postmodernism). By confining philosophical problems and discourse to issues of language or sign systems, the linguistic philosophy implicitly disconnects philosophy and reflective inquiry from the material problems of the world.
- Measures of life value:** These refer to the ranges of the fields of life value which are maintained, gained or lost at the margins in reference to a prior or compared state (e.g., at the collective level, literacy rate growth, caloric and protein intake compared to health requirements, and housing ratios per capita to ratios of able-bodied citizens to available meaningful work of value to others). Life-value measure is applicable to phenomena in any life-field or domain by identification of more/less range of life capacity through time.
- Meta-Ethics:** The study of the nature of moral judgment conventionally preoccupied with the logical status of ought and taxonomies of competing theories in exclusion of substantive moral issues.
- Metaphysics:** The ultimately regulating principles of existence (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) which typically lack grounding in universal life support systems of causation, choice and identity
- Money sequence of value:** Using anything whatever as means (including money derivatives) to turn private money sums into greater quantities in reiterated choice paths of money-value adding. The money sequence of value ultimately regulates and is expressed in myriad forms of what is called “globalization”.

- Moral Philosophy:** Moral philosophy is often equated to Ethics, but is in principle more restricted in reference to ought-to statements which entail prescriptions or prohibitions whose violation is thought to deserve guilt or punishment.
- Onto-axiology:** A concept which supersedes the standard reductionist split between ontology (the philosophy of being) and ethics/axiology (general theory of good and bad).
- Proceduralism:** A generic pattern of leading philosophies of value which assume that universal values can only be implicit in or decided by procedures of argument (e.g., “contractarian” models of justice and norms of “the ideal speech situation”), and whose rational “procedures” distinguish the different schools.
- Relativism:** A generic term for the view that there are no objective or universal values because all values are by their nature relative to the contingent cultures, preferences, individuals, practices and world-views in which they are embedded.
- Ruling value system:** See Social value system.
- Social justice:** The baseline and measure of social justice is defined by the constant principle of its opposite suffering from need by the life-capacity loss entailed by the deprivation of life means. Social justice is the overcoming of the various forms of this iniquity.
- Social value system:** A society’s value-system which is normally presupposed by those governed by it and which ultimately regulates the decision norms and goals of a society’s dominant social institutions, the individual roles within them, and the thought structures of those internalizing its regulating assumptions and conclusions. Also referred to as “ruling v.s.”
- Transcendental deduction:** Logical analysis in which the necessary presuppositions of the intelligibility of a claim or position are deduced as self-evident (eg., the necessary presupposition that all humanity is European in the statement “Columbus discovered America”).
- Universal life goods:** All goods without which human life capacities are reduced or destroyed (eg., breathable air, potable water, means of expression for free speech).
- Validity:** From the Latin, *validus*, or strong, validity is narrowly equated in formalist traditions to inferences which are deducible from premises. A more balanced understanding of validity includes this sub-type of validity, but requires, in “full strength”, consistency with known fact as well as, most primarily, life-coherent purpose.
- Value compossibility:** The compatibility of formerly competing or traded-off goods yielding more coherently inclusive value provision (e.g., housing development by preservation of natural environments).
- Value neutrality:** A standard which is claimed when a value-system is so deeply taken for granted that its outcomes appear as non-normative although achieved by the regulation of strict criteria of value and value judgment (e.g., the canons of scientific method).

Value syntax: Organizing principles of pro-and-con meaning, prescription, position and transformation which regulate the value system of a social order, but which are invisible to or presupposed by those it regulates.

Value-system: Values which cohere as a stable set of regulators of judgment and action whether or not the value deciders are recognized.

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Epstein, Samuel (2005). *Cancer-Gate*, New York: Baywood Press. [Expert explanation of the environmental causation of the many-levelled cancer epidemic, and repression of its meaning.]

Edwards, Paul (1967), *Philosopher's Index*, 8 volumes. London: Macmillan [The most comprehensive encyclopedia of philosophy in existence, the standard reference work for professional philosophers.]

Foucault, M. (1984), *The Foucault Reader* (ed. P. Rabinow), 390 pp. New York: Pantheon. [Best available collection of Foucault's corpus with selections from his wide range of published writings leading the European and later Anglo-American postmodern turn against all universalist theory and categories (including in particular Marxian) into focus on the historical contingency and particularity of repressive institutions, penal, sexual and scientific.

Handy, R. (1969), *Value Theory and the Behavioral Sciences*, 198 pp. Springfield Ill; Thomas Publishers. [Distinctive in the philosophical and social sciences in explicitly equating values to needs, but without a criterion of meaning to distinguish needs from wants across cultural differences.]

Hartmann, Nicolai (1950), *Ethics*, 821 pp. London: Allen and Unwin. [Originally published in Germany as *Ethik* in 1926, follows an ancient philosophical tendency since Plato to conceive moral values as akin to pure mathematical forms whose objective certitude is eternal and independent of perception of them. “Values do not change - - [it is] only our insight into them that changes”.]

Hobbes, Thomas (1651/1958), *The Leviathan. Parts One and Two*, 299 pp. New York: Liberal Arts Press. [The first classic of the liberal canon, arguing on a mechanistic basis that men are matter in motion moved by appetites and aversion, above all towards “power after power that ceaseth only in death” whose generation of interminable conflicts and war breeds an existence which is “nasty, brutish and short” until

all yield up their powers unconditionally to an absolute sovereign, “the Leviathan” state, which “bears their persons” and imposes the peace by which all can live in fear only of it.]

Honderich, T. (1995), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1009 pp. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [A comprehensive dictionary of philosophy by experts in the field with useful bibliographies and philosophical maps.]

Hume, David (1960/1888), *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 709pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press [Hume’s classic study in which he marks a turning point in philosophy towards what is now called “instrumental reason”, characterizing the relation of reason to the passions as the opposite to the classical conception of reason as ruler from Plato to Spinoza: “reason is the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (2.3.3.4). This position becomes is a philosophical precursor of market and now dominant rationality which posits rationality as self-maximizing choice of desire objects.]

Kant, I. (1992), *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, 15 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Includes all Kant’s work in value theory in the inclusive sense, whatever is conceived of worth, or not. His greatest work in moral philosophy, *Critique of Practical Reason*, is distinctive for its rigidly formalist and transcendental understanding of moral meaning. “The moral disposition”, he says in Section 90 of this work, “is the effect of a respect for something entirely different from life, in comparison and contrast which life and its enjoyment have absolutely no worth”.

Kierkegaard, S. (1978), *Kierkegaard’s Writings*, (eds. H.V.and E.V.Hong) 24 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [The most comprehensive collection of Kierkegaard’s work, much of it written under pseudonym, including *Either-Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Philosophical Fragments*, and *Sickness Unto Death* which explain his unprecedented exploration of the “infinite inwardness” of human emotional life which he relates to a transcendent and unknowable God.]

Locke, John (1690/1950), *The Second Treatise on Government*, 139 pp. New York: Liberal Arts Press. [One of the founding classics of liberal value theory whose concepts are directly quoted in French and American revolutionary declarations, arguing for private property by labor right as the ultimate right of free men, but negating the labor and other provisos for property right by the introduction of money.]

MacIntyre, A.(1981), *After Virtue*.275pp.** London: Duckworth. [This is the definitive contemporary work of “virtue ethics”, arguably the most philosophically developed since Aristotle: including the distinction between “internal and external goods”, the criterion of the “practices” and the “excellences” they aim at, but with no criterion to tell a good from a bad virtue or practice.]

Mackie, J.L. (1977), *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, 249 pp. New York: Penguin.[This text is representative of the dominant view that ethics and moral principles are merely “preferences”: arguing in what is called the “error theory” of values that any and all moral or ethical judgments of right and wrong, good or bad, are “false”.]

Marcuse, H., Habermas, J. *et al* (1978-79), Theory and Politics, *Telos* **38**,125-153. [This is a rich debate-discussion revealing the differences and limits of value thought of arguably the two leading progressive moral philosophers of the twentieth century: unintentionally revealing the profound absence of a principled ground for life-value theory even in the works of philosophy’s major theorists of “the life-world” (Habermas) and “the life instinct” (Marcuse)].

Marcuse, H (1964), *One-Dimensional Man*, 260pp.Boston: Beacon Press [Marcuse’s most famous work which was a central text of the 1968 student uprisings in Europe and America, a penetrating critique of capitalist technological culture and its reduction of life to a totalizing consumer-management culture, especially valuable for its methodological insights into philosophic-scientific positivism, but lacking at the core in a principled concept of his theoretical baseline of “vital/ life needs”.]

Marx, Karl and Engels, F. (1975-), *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, 44 vols. (Eds. R. Dixon *et al*). New York: International Publishers [Complete works of Marx in English, relevant where Marx either presupposes or denies value orientation in an underlying conflictedness between moral and onto-ethical concerns of the profoundest kind, on the one hand, and a rigorously conscious scientific method denying issues of value as objectively significant or merely ideological, on the other.]

McMurtry J. (1986) “The Argumentum Ad Adversarium”, *Informal Logic*, VIII.1, 27-36. [Explains the

underlying logical disorder of fallacies by diversion (*ignoratio elenchi*) as forms of switching the issue to an accepted enemy or adversary of the community addressed (e.g., “communist”, “liberal”, “unbeliever”), a track-switch of thought which is argued to be the ultimately regulating structure of fallacious thought and world enmities and divisions.]

McMurtry, J. (1988) “The Unspeakable: Understanding the System of Fallacy of the Media”, *Informal Logic*, 41:3,133-50. [This analysis sets out the general regulating framework of the ruling value syntax as a system of rules which selects against whatever invalidates the presupposed ruling order of control over society’s means of existence, and for whatever validates it.: with the hierarchy of determination of value/disvalue attribution corresponding to the degrees of each.]

McMurtry, J.(1998), *Unequal Freedoms: The Global Market As An Ethical System*, 372 pp. Toronto and Westport CT: Garamond and Kumarian [A systematic critique exposing the unexamined ethical assumptions and assertions of classical, neoclassical and contemporary ethical and political theory as well as policy of the “liberal market order” as a ruling value system.]

McMurtry, J. (2002), *Value Wars: The Global Market versus the Life Economy*, 262pp. London: Pluto Press [This volume explains and tracks the underlying epochal principles of opposing value-systems in the ‘new world order’ across phenomena of wars, social system conflicts, ecological crises and public-sector meltdowns, with defining constitutional regulators for a life-grounded global order.]

Mill, J.S. (1860/1996) *Utilitarianism*, 260pp. New York: Oxford University Press [This volume contains up-to-date commentary on Mill’s classic statement of utilitarianism whose recognition of “higher pleasures” and consistency with a “socialist order” are blocked out of market-all subsequent utility theory: the primary modern statement of value as defined by “the Greatest Happiness Principle” wherein “all actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce pain”.]

Mill, John Stuart (1963-1991), *Collected Works*, 33 vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press [Includes Mill’s most influential philosophical work, *On Liberty*, which classically draws the line of individual freedom against social or state interference with it by the principle of harm to others - providing the world’s most famous defense of freedom of speech.]

Moore, GE (1909), *Principia Ethica*, 272 pp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [This is the classic work of ethical theory of the twentieth century, and exhibits in paradigm form the close analysis of argument and agent-relative premises which have typified the dominant analytic school of Anglo-American moral theory since David Hume: including the defining statement of “moral intuitionism”, the “open question argument”, and the prototype identification of the “naturalistic fallacy”.]

Nadler, Z. (1975), *Values and Valuations*, 191 pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. [Useful scholarly account of what value systems are which, as others in the formalist tradition, avoids discussion of any substantive value.]

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1964), *The Complete Works of Nietzsche* (ed. O. Levy). New York: Russell and Russell. [Includes the works in value theory referred to and critiqued throughout the 6.25 Theme Essay, such as *The Genealogy of Morals* and, in particular, *Beyond Good and Evil*, a later work which explains Nietzsche’s master idea that “values are constructs of domination”, and that moral will is ultimately a “will to power”: with “slave morality” too as a will to power moved by *ressentiment* against the rule of “nature’s aristocracy”, to whose “free expression”, Nietzsche argues, inferior human beings “must be reduced to slaves, to tools”. Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault diversely express the Nietzschean value ontology - the former in a dichotomy of *Sein* (Being) and *das Mann* (loosely, superior and mass man), and the latter in the organizing idea of a ruling knowledge/power alliance which has no limit. The various ways in which Nietzsche’s “will to power/superior-inferior/master-slave” onto-ethic endures is a profound philosophical problematic whose paradox of life-blindness is only resolved by a deeper life-ground onto-axiology.]

Noonan, J. (2003) *Critical Humanism and the Politics of Difference*, 189 pp. Kingston-Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press. [This path breaking study examines postmodernism in the works of its leading authors (e.g., principally Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard and Young), and exposes a deep-structural contradiction - between postmodern denial of any universal human essence and the presupposition of such a value essence - to self-determine - in “the principle of difference” itself and contemporary

“contesting against oppression”.]

Noonan, J. (2006) *Democratic Societies and Human Needs*, 265 pp. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s Press. [An excellent critique of liberal theory and the emergence of a needs-based social morality as the foundation of substantive democracy.]

Nussbaum, M. and Sen, A. eds. (1993) *The Quality of Life*. Clarendon: Oxford University Press. A major collection of articles and replies to them by leaders in the field including the editors, G.A. Cohen, Onera O’Neill, Hilary Putnam, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer, on equality, capability and well-being, gender justice, and standards of living: none of which positions, however, as the 6.25 Theme Essay explains is typical of contemporary philosophical research, grounds in direct life-value criteria, need requirements or life support systems.]

G. Outka and J.P. Reeder eds. (1993), *Prospectus for a Common Morality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. An outstanding collection of original articles by internationally recognized leaders in the field such as Alan Gewirth (a definitive account of human rights as generic directives of action entailing the necessary conditions of their fulfillment) and Richard Rorty (antifoundationalist relativization of truth and freedom prioritizing “liberal democracy”), with no common life interests defined.

Perry, R.B. (1969), *Realms of Value: A Critique of Human Civilization*, 487 pp. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. [Perry provides the most comprehensive argument for a general value theory yet published: briefly, the good = what is desired. At a second-order level, an axiology to justify the value-system of the market order, and, more generally, the contemporary belief that the good for people in all things is what people themselves want.]

Plato (1961), *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns), Pantheon Books: New York. [The complete dialogues - “all philosophy is but footnotes on Plato”, to quote Whitehead - of philosophy’s most famous author and his pervasive interlocutor model, Socrates, which may all be understood as modes of value theory in the inclusive sense of whatever is, and is not, of worth. Includes Plato’s most philosophically comprehensive work, *The Republic*, which integrates metaphysics/ontology, epistemology, moral philosophy and social and political philosophy in one dialogue, whose stated aim is a theory of justice symmetrically applicable to the individual soul and the ideal society at once. Plato’s “Theory of Forms”, positing pure, transcendental and eternal ideas of which all material entities are but inferior, mutable copies is his/Socrates’ most distinctive theory, and the primary classical position of philosophical Idealism.]

Radhakrishnan, S. and Moore, C. (1957), *Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, 683pp. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [This is a definitive collection of Indian philosophy and non-Western value understanding, including the full texts of the eleven principal Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita, and substantial selections from early and late Buddhism and Sri Aurobindo.]

Rawls, J. (1967), *A Theory of Justice*. 542pp. Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press. [Recognized definitive work of the twentieth century political philosophy, complementing Moore’s *Principia Ethica* as the two leading classics of normative theory of the era. Its paradigmatic starting point of rational value-judgment is the principle of self-maximizing rationality, “including wanting a larger share for oneself”, the starting-point of “the contemporary social sciences” as well. Rawl’s “veil of ignorance” to decouple agents from their conditions of life: following the regulating methodological a-priori of the era.]

Rescher, N. (1969), *Introduction to Value Theory*, 205 pp. Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.[This monograph by the most published analytic philosopher of the last century exemplifies the era’s formalist method and symbolic notations from which issues of life value are a-priori eliminated.]

Rorty, R. (1989), *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, 289 pp. New York: Cambridge University Press. [With his earlier *The Mirror of Nature* which deconstructs the philosophical-scientific correspondence theory of truth, the most prominent text of the anti-foundationalist movement in philosophy, denying any common standard of truth or value].

Russell, Bertrand (1983-), *Bertrand Russell: Collected Papers*, 29 vols. London: Allen and Unwin. [Includes Russell’s prolific corpus of philosophical and public works, including his famous works of ‘type theory’ of logically higher and lower order classes of properties (e.g., the color property of colored objects is a higher order property than the combination of all of the members of the class of colored

objects). His works on denotation and description, the logical foundations of mathematics, sense data and logical atomism, neutral monism, and probability comprise a string of innovative technical solutions and theories to resolve paradoxes of which only the theory of types has not been abandoned. An early leader of Anglo-American technical analytic philosophy, his greatest contribution may be in his many irreverent popular essays and books which set a style of pellucid routings of well-entrenched beliefs and dogmatic assumptions on major social issues from sexual morality to nuclear-arms. He regretted twentieth-century philosophy's wide abandonment of understanding the world itself, "that grave and important task which philosophy throughout has hitherto pursued".

Scheler, Max (1973), *Selected Philosophical Essays*, 320 pp. Evanston U.S.: Northwestern University Press. [A representative collection of Scheler's work which distinctively holds that values are objective and unchanging objects of emotions and feelings rather than reason.]

Sen, A (1998), *The Possibility of Social Choice*", 37pp. Trinity College, Cambridge: Nobel Lecture [This lecture provides an incomparably rich documentation of the literature on social choice, demonstrating there is no conception of social choice in received social science or philosophy other than as an aggregation of individual choosers: an atomic metaphysics of choice to which collective responsibility does not compute.]

Singer, Irving (1966 -1987), *The Nature of Love*, 3 volumes. Chicago: Chicago University Press. [The most comprehensive study of theories of love from Plato to Sartre, which argues against any unifying principle of value in a richly learned tapestry of analysis which features the "grace" of love as "bestowal of value" on the love object, the implied source of love's happiness.]

Singer, Peter, *Animal Liberation: Man's Inhumanity to Animals* (1983). 302 pp. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Thorsons Press. [The definitive work by the best known advocate of animal rights, who deploys utilitarian ethics and the pain-reduction principle to argue against the standardized cruel abuse of domestic animals in factory food production; but fails to see that this generalized ethic of suffering-free treatment of animals implies that pain-free domesticated animals have better lives by this measure and thus ought to substitute for animals experiencing much pain and suffering in the wilderness.]

Spinoza, Baruch (1985), *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (ed. E. Curley), 7 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [Spinoza's greatest work, the *Ethics* is a deductive system modeled on Euclid's definitions, axioms and theorems in which God or infinite substance is conceived as the rational system of the universe in its thinking and extended modes and infinite attributes which can be better (more adequately) or worse (less adequately) comprehended, from vague and emotional experience through general reasoning to scientific intuition (*scientia intuitiva*) of the logically determined whole from the comprehensively rational experience of it - ultimately the true "self interest" of the individual.]

Suzuki, D.T. (1956). *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki* (ed. W. Barrett). 294 pp. Garden City N.Y.: Doubleday [A useful selection of writings of the most widely recognized scholar of Zen, but as elsewhere without a principle of value to rule against life-incapacitating

Vico, G. (1724/1984), *The New Science*, 445 pp. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press. [The first modern classic of the philosophy of history in which Vico argues that humanity can only know for certain that which it has created, because it is a human construction - an epistemological claim that seems disproved in the case of the most important human constructions, the ruling value systems of societies, that which is least of all examined.]

Whitehead, A.N. (1938), *Modes of Thought*, 172 pp. New York: Macmillan [Whitehead's most well known lectures on his "process philosophy" which conceives Nature as "alive", "feeling", "purposing" and ever "creative" in the energy flows described by physics (the totality of which processes he conceives as God), as opposed to "dead" and "inert" in the Newtonian tradition

Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1968), *Philosophical Investigations*. 260 pp. New York: Macmillan. [Perhaps the most celebrated work of twentieth-century philosophy, it leads what philosophers have come to call "the linguistic turn", often referenced and variously rebutted in the 6.25 Theme Essay as ultimately the major philosophical movement of the twentieth century, moving far beyond Wittgenstein and his school in its influence (e.g., anti-foundationalism, postmodernism), and decisively disconnecting philosophical problems from the life-ground and the material problems of the world. The *Investigations* features his anchoring concept of "language games", in terms of which philosophical problems are analyzed as

basically linguistic muddles, and his earlier logical-empiricist/scientific “picture theory” of language is implicitly renounced.]

M.E. Zimmerman, J.B. Callicott, J.Clark, G. Sessions, K. J. Warren eds. (1998). *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*. Prentice Hall: London (The most critically wide-ranging text in the field of philosophy of the environment with articles by such well-known figures as Thomas Berry, Aldo Leopold (the pioneer of the Land Ethic), Arne Ness (definitive account of Deep Ecology by the founder), Carolyn Merchant (defining excerpts from *The Death of Nature*), James O’Connor (leader of socialism and ecology movement), Tom Regan, Peter Singer, Paul Taylor (animal rights), Gary Snyder (bio-regionalism), and the editors (covering such fields as ecofeminism and social ecology).

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.-