

The Philosophy of Value (3)

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CHAPTER V The System of Value

Paragraph II Economic Value

I

Value was first recognized in economic phenomena, and therefore, the concept of value was first constituted by economists. It was then gradually expanded to the other closely related branches of learning, such as aesthetics, ethics, philosophy etc. and has come to be accepted as it is today.

The value of gain, therefore, lays the foundation for explanation of other values. Now we have reached the stage where we can clarify the problem of what the value of gain really means in order to constitute the concept of value in general. However, no more proper explanation can be given than to say that the value of gain is but the relationship between an evaluating subject and an object which can be measured with the standard balance which is provided by the two concepts of gain and loss as its antipodes and has innumerable degrees between them. What then is gain? What is loss? By gain is meant the relation-power of an object which can prolong the human *life* of an evaluating subject or *subject*, and by loss is meant the relation-power which can shorten the *life*. No other proper explanation can be found.

II

Kautsky, a Marxian scholar, stated, “An illusion frequently held by proponents as well as by enemies of the Marxian theory is that value and wealth are the same. There are often found persons who tend to insist the saying, ‘Labor is the source of all wealth’ as if it had been stated by Marx himself.” With this opinion I quite agree. In order to explain value, every economist attempts to make value understood by comparison and analysis of wealth and value after giving the explanation of wealth. What then is so-called “wealth”?

Goods and wealth were often confused by economists. Both appear to be the same, but when compared strictly, they sometimes have broad or narrow differences. Generally speaking, however, wealth is commonly interpreted as a generic term standing for the accumulation of goods.

Not only Marxists but all other economists explain that everything which has the nature of gratifying human desires can be said to constitute wealth, and that all useful things are wealth. All useful things of the natural world without any human labor can be generally termed wealth.

III

The humankind has no power to create matter. I described in brief at the beginning of this book that the humankind thinks he or she can create only value. I believe that this is not my personal opinion but the agreement of all economic theories. There may be only some differences in expression. There may be also some differences whether the humankind directly creates value or not. As we term value wealth, goods, utility, by labor the humankind can only create a new utility by changing the combination, form, position, etc. of natural things.

The humankind wants to obtain and use goods which are the *objects* of his or her economic action, thereby in order to enrich the contents of life on the material side. The humankind knows that goods have the possibility of gratifying human desires which have relationship with his or her material life. This possibility is usefulness, and utility means this efficiency.

The various peculiar qualities immanent in goods do not have utility to the humankind until they come to be objects which gratify his or her desires and are related correlatively to the humankind. Utility is produced when the humankind has desires necessary for living and when something which has sufficient quality to gratify these desires happens to exist and matches these desires. Thus, goods become useful and utile when a relation such as an attracting power is produced between human desires and the quality of goods as the result of proper adaptability of them.

Since utility is produced in this way by the correlative relation between the two parties, it naturally changes, if either or both of them should change. Even if natural efficiency inherent in goods which is the object of desire is invariable, its utility changes when human desire changes, because utility is produced by the correlative relation of the two parties. If human desire becomes more intense, the utility of goods increases, and if human desire diminishes, the utility does likewise. Similarly, even if there is no change in human desire, utility come to change when the efficiency of goods changes.

IV

When we measure the quantity of the utility of goods to human life or ascertain the degree to which human beings rely on it, and represent the degree of the preciousness of goods, we use the expression “value”, and call that action of measurement “evaluation”. Therefore, value means the degree of importance which goods have to us.

The word “value” has become broadly significant not only in economics but also in philosophy, ethics and aesthetics.

Judgment of value is widely passed over on various affairs of our daily lives. So-called values treated in aesthetics, ethics, etc., appear different in meaning, but in the broad sense of the word, they are based on the same meaning that value is but the degree of importance in human life.

Since evaluation is a form of measuring and weighing the degree of utility, utility and value are not the same concepts. However, their relationship is inseparable. Utility can exist isolated from value, but value cannot be considered independently of utility. Value without utility does not exist.

In economics the term value is used with two meanings. One is called utility value and means the measurement of utility. The other is called exchange value and means the value of goods which is represented when the ratio of the utility of goods is compared with those of other goods. Therefore, in this case, it can safely be said that the value of goods is shown by the rate exchangeable for other goods.

Utility value means each individual’s subjective gain, while exchange value is the utility value which is approved by society in general. In other words, when subjective and personal gain which is latent in each individual mind is objectively acknowledged by society in general, we term it exchange value. Therefore, the objective value in economics means this exchange capability and said to be a relation of power or efficiency between goods and its objective result.

Paragraph III Moral Value

I

The terms of evaluation, such as good and evil, are used exclusively by

society. They are used only in a case where a group praises or reproves an individual who is himself an element or a part of the group in a group life.

What is the concept of good, then? My definition of good is “Public benefit”. This definition may appear to be insufficient, as it is too simple. But we cannot find any other proper expression than “public benefit is good” . Public benefit is not gain of an individual or a family. When private gain conflicts with public benefit, it is said that private gain which ignores public benefit is evil. In other words, it is clear that private gain contrary to public benefit is evil and public benefit contrary to private gain is good. Public means a group composed of individuals and families forming the group which is called society.

A person who places primary importance on group life, making his or her personal life subordinate to group life, is called a good person.

Therefore, individual gain common to all people is good, and individual gain uncommon to all people is not good. Unless an evaluating subject is abnormal(foolish, crazy, or evil), individual gain judged by human normal nature is common to good, because the individual gain is desired by everyone of the same normal nature, i.e., by judgment based on a normal person’s common nature which means the common human nature.

The instinct for existence common to humankind is regarded as absolute value and forms the basis for judging other relative values. Every type of value is derived from the instinct for existence common to humankind and all other living creatures. This is because it is based on the supposition that a human being has a nature common to all people in addition to his or her own individuality.

From an objective viewpoint, this gain common to all people can only be stipulated negatively, because a person has a unique individuality and there are numerous differences in the quantity of desire even though the quality of

a person's desire is common to all people. What a person positively desires can be separated into countless degrees, but there is one point of the degree common to all people where a person only desires negatively. Herein lies the principle of highest criticism stipulating the negative limitation of morality.

I term this limitation an 'unwilling border-line' of moral maxims. The Western proverb, "Do unto others what you would have others do unto you", appears to be positive and appropriate, but it lacks universal validity. Therefore, it cannot be objectively and scientifically approved to be valid truth. Consequently, we cannot force all people to observe its practice. On the contrary, the Oriental proverb, "Do not do unto others what you would not have others do unto you", can be said to be scientific truth. We cannot but admire the expression's being scientific.

However, practicing the proverb, "Do not do unto others what you would not have others do unto you", can only spare us being immoral persons. A desire not to do immoral behaviors is a common human desire. When we think only of ourselves, it may happen that a person will do an unwilling action without being immoral. Any action which everyone considers at heart as being unsatisfactory or disgraceful is certainly blamed as being not good by others, criticized and regarded as being immoral by society.

But a person cannot be regarded as a moral person, even though the person does not act immorally. The person only spares the humiliation of being an immoral person. Therefore, the unwilling border-line cannot be said to establish the only principle of ethics and morality, though a part of the moral principle is certainly stipulated by it.

Crime is anti-social action which can be justified only by the narrow judgment of the wicked, foolish, crazy and the like. Such action is a nuisance to other members living common lives.

Even a person who cannot satisfactorily do the person's will without

annoying others who live corporative lives and an ignorant person who cannot live his or her life without conflict with others will come to heed the gain-loss of society as well as his or her own gain-loss, if once the person can heed the existence of society. Though a person in childhood is apt to infringe upon the rights of others carelessly by his or her not unified and impulsive behavior, a good family will strive to rectify his or her evil inclinations constantly and to change them into harmonious common nature gradually. Thus, a person can live a so-called 'common life' and acquire an adult right to existence. We can comparatively often observe among noble and wealthy families an only son "not properly brought up" due to the spoiling by his parents.

Law stipulates the lowest limitation of morality. It does not require doing good, but punishes people for doing evil. Therefore, the judiciary does not interfere at all with not doing good, but punishes those subjects who happen to violate the law, considering them as criminals or evil persons. Therefore, the officials concerned always watch the minority of criminals, watching over the negative limitation observing whether or not a person infringes on the rights of others in human society, and whether or not the person disturbs their rights to existence. Judicial organizations are not those which promote good, but only those which punish the evil. They are not organizations to promote good and therefore have lost the power to prevent from evil.

Morality represents the contents of evaluations which evaluate the degree of gain-loss of a person's action in the social life by a evaluation-balance which has good and evil at its antipodes. Law stipulates the limitation of evil which stands at one of these antipodes, passes judgment on whether or not a person's action violates the lowest limitation of morality, the inhuman line, and punishes those who have committed crime.