

WHITE PAPER 2025

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION



Published by **KYOTO
INSTITUTE OF
PHILOSOPHY**

SEPTEMBER 1, 2025

Supervisors
Yasuo Deguchi
Markus Gabriel

Lead Author
Ryosuke Igarashi

Research Team
Samuel Mortimer
Shunichi Takagi
Maiko Tsuji

- This document is a *Draft for Discussion*. Its contents are subject to revision based on reviews and discussions.
- The key concepts presented in this paper (marked with *) are defined in the glossary at the end.

Executive Summery

Heightened geopolitical tensions, accelerating climate change, and the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence have converged to create an unprecedented constellation of challenges. Conventional problem-solving frameworks are proving inadequate because the twentieth-century grand narrative—unlimited economic growth and technoscientific advancement as the primary path to societal progress—has lost its effectiveness. The absence of a shared destination and compass now undermines decision-making at every level of society.

Across business, policy, and academia, this situation forces a return to more fundamental questions: **What do we recognize as valuable, and what kind of society ought we to pursue?** Technoscientific advances and economic rationality provide unparalleled tools for achieving social goals; however, it is only by turning to the question of values that we can determine which goals we should aim for. Addressing this question of values is the central task of the present paper.

Our principal contribution is a conceptual framework for analysing the structural roots of today's challenges. We theorise two dynamic processes that generate these challenges: **Fragmentation**—structural conflict among existing value systems—and **Transformation**—the fundamental reconfiguration of values triggered by new technologies and social change. To analyse and respond constructively to these processes, we propose the **ABC Model**. This model comprehends social phenomena through three levels: the visible *Action Level* (A), the underlying *Core Level* (C) of values and worldviews, and the mediating *Bridge Level* (B) that connects them. The model enables analytic **diving** from Action to Core and creative **surfacing** from renewed Core values to future practices.

This theoretical architecture draws upon the intellectual resources of philosophy and the humanities. We argue that these disciplines, by clarifying assumptions, analysing concepts, facilitating value dialogue, and constructing new norms, are indispensable for rigorous value inquiry and practical action.

Building on this analysis, we articulate **Four Strategic Agendas** for societal transformation:

1. **Focus on Values:** Explicitly address the value dimension underlying organisational and societal issues.
2. **Unite Fundamental Questions and Praxis:** Investigate value inquiry with practice in all domains of society.
3. **Leverage the Humanities:** Apply scholarly insights on values proactively within practical contexts.
4. **Build a Value Co-creation Network:** Establish cross-sectoral, cross-regional platforms for collaborative value exploration.

These agendas converge on the vision of a **Multilayered Society of Values***—a model that embraces value pluralism and multilayeredness (a structure where individuals and societies hold multiple, potentially conflicting values within themselves) as sources of social richness, fostering inclusive and innovative futures through continuous dialogue and constructive tension.

This paper is intended to contribute to the collaborative inquiry by academia, industry, policymakers, artists, educators, religious leaders, and civil society toward the realization of this vision.

Table of Contents

Executive Summery	1
Prologue: Changing the Way We Ask Questions.....	5
1. The Escalating Complexity and Gravity of Contemporary Challenges.....	5
2. The Failure of the Twentieth-Century <i>Grand Narrative</i>	5
3. The Return to Questions of Value: the Purpose and Approach of this Paper.....	5
Part I: Why Question Values?	9
Chapter 1: <i>Value</i> at the Heart of Every Problem.....	10
1.1 The Essence of the <i>Fundamental Questions</i>	10
1.2 The Double Difficulty of Questioning Values Today	10
1.3 The Core of the Challenge: The Plurality of Values and the Multilayeredness that Contains It.....	11
Chapter 2: An Analytical and Generative Framework for Innovation.....	13
2.1 Structuring Complex Reality — The <i>ABC Model</i>	13
2.2 A Dynamic Process of Analysis and Imagination — Diving and Surfacing.....	14
2.3 Integrating Plural Perspectives — The <i>Value-Relation Matrix</i>	15
Chapter 3: The Intellectual Craft of Engaging with <i>Value</i> — A Renaissance of the Humanities	17
3.1 Specialised Knowledge in Value Inquiry and Its Practical Role	17
3.2 Philosophy’s Distinct Contribution: Questioning the Roots of Value and Constructing New Norms.....	17
3.3 Disciplinary Crisis and the Need for <i>Recoupling</i> with Practice	18
Part II: Reading the Present through the Lens of Value — Case Studies and Future	

Envisioning.....	19
Chapter 4: Case Studies: Deciphering the Deep Structure of Contemporary Challenges.....	20
4.1. This Chapter's Perspective: The Mechanisms of <i>Fragmentation</i> and <i>Transformation</i>	20
4.2. Case 1: The Structure of <i>Fragmentation</i> — Geopolitical Conflict and the Wavering of Democracy	20
4.3. Case 2: The Structure of <i>Transformation</i> — AI and the Redefinition of <i>the Human</i>	22
Chapter 5: Envisioning Value — A Blueprint for the Future.....	25
5.1. From Analysis to Envisioning: Crafting a New <i>Narrative of Hope</i>	25
5.2. Global Trends: Voices Calling for New Values.....	25
5.3. An Example of Shifting Values and Worldviews: The WE-Turn.....	27
5.4. The <i>Chu-Ku</i> Structure: The Conditions for a <i>Good WE</i> and the Principle for Overcoming Division	28
5.5 Toward the Co-creation of Diverse Blueprints	29
Part III: Agenda for the Future.....	33
Chapter 6: Four Agendas for Enacting the Future	34
The Four Agendas.....	34
Final Chapter: Toward a Vision of a <i>Multilayered Society of Values</i>	36
Appendix: Glossary.....	39
Bibliography	43

Prologue: Changing the Way We Ask Questions

1. The Escalating Complexity and Gravity of Contemporary Challenges

We live in an era confronted by challenges without historical precedent. Geopolitical tensions undermine global stability; climate change threatens the very foundations of human survival; and exponential technological advances—epitomised by artificial intelligence (AI)—are reshaping the structure of society from its core.

These issues do not manifest as isolated phenomena. Rather, they intertwine and reinforce one another to form what can be called a *polycrisis*¹—a complex web of crises. Faced with this enormous structural challenge, existing problem-solving methods risk losing their efficacy. Executives, policymakers, and civil society leaders alike now face decision-making environments characterized by unparalleled uncertainty².

2. The Failure of the Twentieth-Century *Grand Narrative*

Underlying this difficulty lies a deeper problem: the shared narrative that sustained societal progress throughout the twentieth century has become dysfunctional. As the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard foresaw, the *grand récits* (grand narratives)³ such as economic growth and technological progress that once integrated society have continued to lose their explanatory and motivational power since the latter half of the 20th century. The fruits of growth have not been equitably distributed; inequality has widened; and technological progress, while enriching lives, has spawned new ethical dilemmas and social polarisation.

The core issue is not merely the obsolescence of certain strategies or tactics, but the erosion of a collectively accepted definition of “progress.” Growth—a means—has been mistaken for an end, eclipsing the human flourishing it was meant to serve. This phenomenon may aptly be called the *emptiness of progress*.

3. The Return to Questions of Value: the Purpose and Approach of this Paper

Now that a shared destination has been lost, it has become inevitable for all actors to confront fundamental questions from where they stand.

Questions like “What does ‘development’ mean in the first place?” and “What kind of ‘good society’ should we aim for?” shift the axis of thought from a discussion of *means* (how), such as technology and resources, to a discussion of the *purpose* (why) we should aim for. At its core is none other than the question of **value**: **“What do we consider important,**

desirable, and right?"

This return to questions of value is not an abstract debate but a practical necessity. The "Beyond GDP" trend, which re-evaluates societal indicators biased toward economic growth, is one example. Such trends have also influenced the policy agendas of the international community, and one practical response that has come to fruition is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴ set forth by the United Nations. The SDGs served as a compass for the first quarter of the 21st century by comprehensively indicating the goals humanity should share.

However, in recent years, the structural limitations inherent in the SDGs have also become apparent.

First, there is the absence of a higher-order guiding principle to overcome the conflicts of value between goals, a problem we term **fragmentation**. The 17 goals are comprehensive and thus include serious trade-offs, such as between "economic growth" and "environmental protection." Yet, the framework itself is not equipped with a higher-order logic to guide the judgment of what to prioritize when these values conflict.

Second is the problem that its design philosophy has not been able to cope with the fundamental **transformation** that began to shake society after its formulation. In an era where the evolution of AI even questions the definition of "humanity," the very creation of new values, such as "desirable coexistence between humans and AI," is required, but the SDGs are not designed to address such new questions head-on.

Thus, fragmentation, where existing values collide, and transformation, where new realities compel us to redefine values themselves—this dual challenge is the starting point for envisioning a post-SDG agenda. To respond to this challenge by fundamentally re-examining "what is value" is the practical necessity imposed upon us right now.

However, there is no single, absolute answer to the fundamental questions we face. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is not to offer a simple prescription. Rather, it is to propose a **mode of thinking** that enables leaders from all sectors to confront this difficult question head-on and to create new guiding principles with their own hands. This paper aims to be a guide for thought, leading this intellectual and practical challenge.

¹ Polycrisis: A situation where multiple global crises occur simultaneously and interact with each other, creating a composite threat that exceeds the sum of individual crises. Although the term has existed since the 1990s, it regained attention when historian Adam Tooze used it effectively in the context of analyzing today's complex global situation ((Kern & Morin, 1993; Tooze, 2019, 2021). It became widely used in international

policy and business discussions, especially after the World Economic Forum (WEF) adopted it as a central analytical concept in its 2023 Global Risks Report.

² Various concepts have been proposed to describe the unpredictable nature of modern society. In addition to **VUCA** (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity), which has been widely used in the business domain (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Mackey, 1992), futurist Jamais Cascio proposed "**BANI**" to depict a more severe and chaotic situation (Cascio, 2020). This concept describes the modern condition where systems are **Brittle**, people are **Anxious**, causality is **Non-linear**, and events are **Incomprehensible**.

³ **Grand Récit** (grand narrative): A central concept proposed by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in his 1979 work *The Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard, 1984). It refers to a comprehensive and universal worldview or historical perspective (e.g., "the liberation of humanity through scientific and technological progress") that legitimizes a society's or culture's institutions, practices, and knowledge, integrating people toward a single direction. Lyotard diagnosed the postmodern condition as an era where such "grand narratives" have lost their persuasive power, leading to the proliferation of diverse, local "small narratives."

⁴ **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**: 17 international goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015, to be achieved by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). They comprehensively address global challenges facing humanity, from poverty eradication to climate change measures, with the basic principle of "leaving no one behind." However, nearly a decade after their formulation, achieving many of the goals is considered difficult. Furthermore, new challenges unforeseen at the time of their creation, such as the emergence of generative AI and the intensification of geopolitical conflicts, have become apparent. This highlights the necessity of formulating a new global agenda for what this paper calls the "post-SDGs era."

Part I: Why Question Values?

Purpose and Overview

Part I, which lays the foundation for the discussion in this paper, systematically discusses why questioning *value* is unavoidable in the contemporary world. It builds a theoretical groundwork for solving modern social challenges—where superficial problem-solving approaches have reached their limits—from the underlying dimension of *value*.

Chapter Overviews

- **Chapter 1: *Value at the Heart of Every Problem*:** Shows how the *fundamental questions* facing modern leaders inevitably converge on the question of value. It also analyzes the difficulty of questioning value as a dual structure of the *collision* of existing value systems and the *creation* of new values. Finally, it reveals the complexity lurking behind these challenges: the *pluralism* and *multilayeredness* of values.
- **Chapter 2: *An Analytical and Generative Framework for Innovation*:** Presents practical tools to systematically analyze the complex structure of values and to envision the future. It clarifies the path to fundamental transformation through the structuring of reality with the ABC model, a dynamic thought process of *Diving and Surfacing*, and a *Value-Relation Matrix* for integrating diverse perspectives.
- **Chapter 3: *The Intellectual Craft of Engaging with Value*:** Redefines the practical role of the humanities, especially philosophy, in supporting value inquiry. It systematizes four intellectual activities for questioning the roots of value and envisioning new norms, and discusses the need for their *recoupling* with real-world problem-solving.

Chapter 1: *Value* at the Heart of Every Problem

1.1 The Essence of the *Fundamental Questions*

As discussed in the Prologue, today's leaders have lost a once-self-evident roadmap for progress and are compelled to return to fundamental questions. But what exactly is the nature of those questions?

"What does 'development' mean in the first place?"

"What kind of 'good society' should we aim for?"

"For whom, and for what purpose, should technology exist?"

All of these fundamental questions ultimately converge into one: **What do we believe to be important, desirable, and right?** This is none other than the definition of **value** that this paper discusses. In other words, value is "what we believe to be important, desirable, and right," and it is the inner vector that points to the **orientation** we should take.

Therefore, our endeavor to return to *fundamental questions* is inevitably and inextricably linked to *questioning value*. The root cause of stalled strategies and plans lies not only in the lack of visible elements like technology and resources. It stems from our inability to consciously access the dimension of *value*, which is the foundation of all organizational and individual actions.

1.2 The Double Difficulty of Questioning Values Today

Why has the act of *questioning value* become so important, yet so difficult, in our time? The structure of this challenge can be understood from two different but interrelated aspects.

First is the **collision of existing value systems**. The dysfunction of the *twentieth-century grand narrative*, as mentioned in the Prologue, has unleashed a variety of values onto a level playing field, values that were previously implicitly hierarchized. Values that were once considered secondary under the supreme mandate of *economic growth*—such as *environmental sustainability*, *cultural diversity*, and *regional autonomy*—have begun to assert their own legitimacy. As a result, today's leaders are confronted with apparently intractable **trade-offs**, such as "global competitiveness or domestic employment protection?" and "acceleration of innovation or ethical considerations?" This clash of values is causing serious **fragmentation** in society.

Second is the necessity of **creating new values** in response to new realities. Tectonic shifts like the evolution of AI and the life sciences are shaking the very foundations of existing value systems we have relied upon, presenting us with entirely new questions. "What is the essential difference between human and machine creativity?" "To what extent should we permit gene-editing technologies?" These are questions that cannot be answered merely by extending past ethical norms and values. We are facing an unprecedented

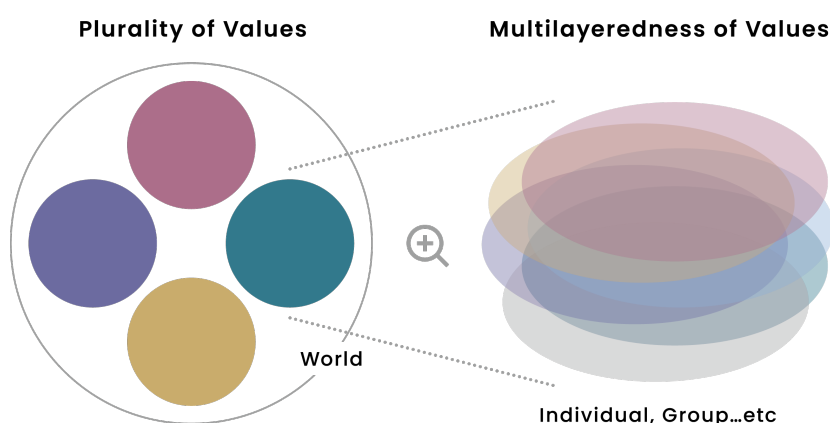
challenge: **we must create new value standards themselves** to respond to new realities. This is nothing less than a structural **transformation** being forced upon the very foundations of society.

1.3 The Core of the Challenge: The Plurality of Values and the Multilayeredness that Contains It

Beneath this double difficulty lies an even more fundamental structure: the **pluralism** and **multilayeredness** of values.

*Value pluralism*⁵ refers to the nature of diverse values present in society (e.g., liberty, equality, safety, tradition) each possessing its own legitimacy and being immeasurable by a single, absolute scale. This *incommensurability*⁶ makes consensus-building between subjects with different value systems intrinsically difficult. As Isaiah Berlin emphasized, ultimate human values such as liberty, equality, and justice may contradict one another, and no single ideal society exists that can simultaneously and fully satisfy them all. This recognition was further deepened by Charles Taylor, who argued that this conflict generates the fundamental tensions of modern society not just between abstract values, but between different cultural forms with their own *authentic* ways of being (Taylor, 1992, 1994). This recognition of value *pluralism* is the starting point of our discussion.

However, further complicating contemporary challenges is the fact that this conflict of pluralistic values does not exist only between different nations or organizations. What we want to particularly highlight here is the structure in which **contradictory and conflicting values exist in multiple layers even inside each individual, organization, and society**. We call this the **multilayeredness of values**.



For example, a conflict can be seen in many societies and individuals with the advance of globalization: accepting values derived from Western modernity as the basic principles of one's own society, while at the same time wanting to respect the values based on the unique traditions and culture of the community that the society has historically nurtured.

This is an internal tension that should be understood carefully, without falling into stereotypical cultural relativism or Orientalism⁷. To ignore this *internal multilayered structure of values* and to see a subject only as a representative of a single value system is a dangerous intellectual simplification, similar to the situation Amartya Sen warned against regarding the *diminishment* of identity⁸.

To face this dual structure of external *pluralism* and internal *multilayeredness* head-on and to overcome it, new intellectual tools are essential to replace conventional ways of thinking. The next chapter will present a specific mode of thought for that purpose.

⁵ Value Pluralism: A philosophical position holding that multiple different values exist in human society (e.g., liberty, equality, security, beauty, truth), each with its own inherent legitimacy, making it impossible to rank them on a single scale. While its origins can be traced to the 19th-century thinker John Stuart Mill, it was systemized by the 20th-century political philosopher Isaiah Berlin, becoming a crucial theoretical foundation for modern liberalism. Berlin demonstrated that even ideal values can fundamentally conflict, arguing for the impossibility of a perfect society. This recognition provides a vital perspective for understanding value conflicts in contemporary multicultural societies and international relations (Berlin, 1969; Berlin & Banville, 2013; Raz, 1986).

⁶ Incommensurability: A core concept used by philosopher Isaiah Berlin and others when discussing value pluralism. It refers to a state where there is no single common scale to compare and evaluate two or more different value systems or concepts (e.g., "artistic value" and "economic value"), making it impossible to fully translate or reduce one to the other. It is a crucial concept for confronting the reality that even though values like "liberty" and "equality" are ultimately important for humans, no single ideal society can simultaneously and completely satisfy them (Chang, 1997).

⁷ Orientalism: A critical term proposed by literary critic Edward Said in his seminal 1978 work, referring to the prejudiced and distorted system of images that the West has held of the "East (Orient)." Said argued that the West has justified power relations, including colonial rule, by representing the Orient as an "other" that is exotic, irrational, and backward, in contrast to itself (Said, 1978).

⁸ Identity Diminishment: A concept that Nobel laureate in Economics Amartya Sen warned against in works such as *Identity and Violence* (A. K. Sen, 2007). It points to the danger of ignoring an individual's diverse and complex identities (nationality, religion, profession, hobbies, etc.) and reducing them to a single attribute (e.g., "Muslim," "Westerner"). Sen argued that such intellectual simplification fosters stereotypical perceptions of others and can become a breeding ground for serious conflict and violence.

Chapter 2: An Analytical and Generative Framework for Innovation

2.1 Structuring Complex Reality — The *ABC Model*

The reason value-related problems are complex is that events at different levels are intertwined in invisible ways. Why do discussions at the strategic level and problems occurring in daily operations often fail to connect? The root cause lies in the invisible disconnect of values that lies between them. To structurally grasp this complex reality, we propose the **ABC Model**^{*}, which captures society in three levels. This model aligns with the insights of many preceding studies that distinguish between superficial phenomena and their deep structures (e.g., the Iceberg Model⁹ or U Theory¹⁰), and is specifically designed to analyze the function of value in contemporary society.

- **A-Level: Action**

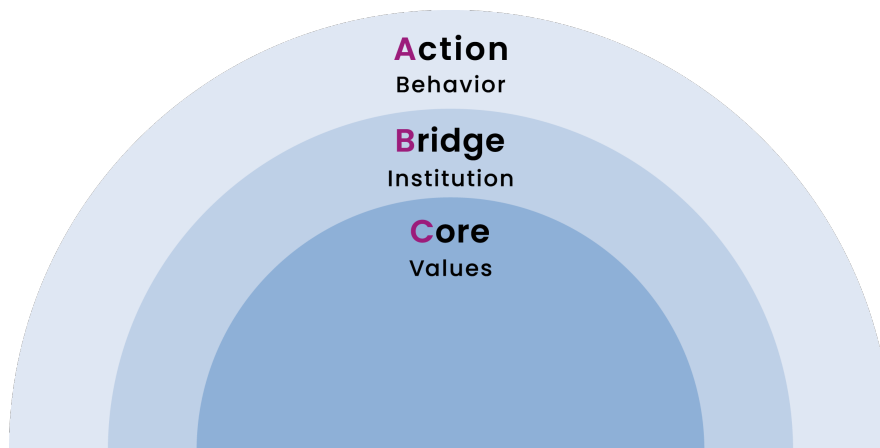
This is the level of concrete activities we perform daily and the **practices and behaviors** that appear visibly in society. It is the most superficial and easily observable level, but its state is also a mirror reflecting the state of the deeper B and C levels.

- **B-Level: Bridge**

This is the level that plays a **mediating function (Bridge)** between the superficial concrete actions (A-Level) and the *values and worldviews* (C-Level) that fundamentally direct them. This level is composed of diverse elements, including **formal institutions** such as laws, regulations, and organizational structures, and **informal institutions** such as social customs, mindsets, shared perceptions, and artistic expressions. As its name suggests, it plays the role of a *bridge* connecting *ideals* and *practice*.

- **C-Level: Core**

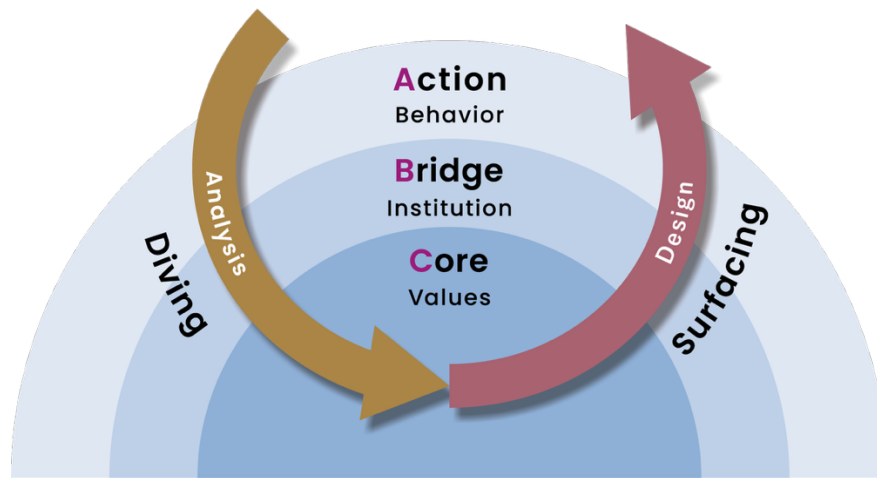
This is the level of **values and worldviews** that fundamentally directs the actions of society, organizations, and individuals. It is the **foundation of thought and action** that underlies how we perceive and give meaning to the world, and it deals with the deepest level of questions such as *what is good* and *what is important*.



2.2 A Dynamic Process of Analysis and Imagination — Diving and Surfacing

This ABC model prompts a dynamic thought process for generating fundamental change. This thought process has two vectors: **Diving** and **Surfacing***

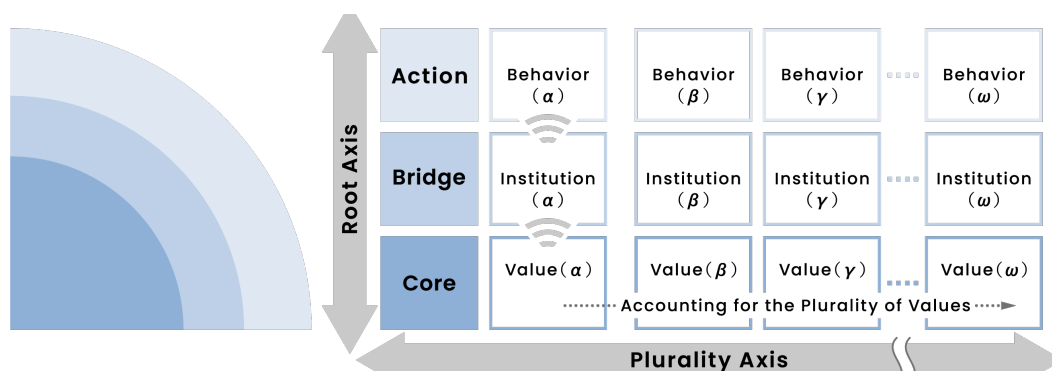
- **Diving:** Starting from a problem in the visible Action (A-Level), for example, "the introduction of renewable energy as a response to climate change is not progressing sufficiently." We ask, "Why is this action stagnating?" and analyze the dysfunction of the underlying Bridge (B-Level), for instance, "a market system that fails to adequately price the social cost of carbon emissions" or "policies that favor existing fossil fuel industries." We then deepen the inquiry: "Why do we maintain such systems and policies?" and delve into the root Core (C-Level), such as "a value system that prioritizes short-term economic growth over the long-term sustainability of the global environment" or "a worldview that values the interests of the current generation over the responsibility to future generations." This is an **analytical process to identify the root cause of the problem**.
- **Surfacing:** Suppose we have identified a new value or purpose at the Core (C-Level) level, such as "what we should truly aim for is coexistence with a sustainable society." Taking that as a new starting point, we then envision, "What kind of Bridge (institutions and social forms) should we redesign to realize that value?" and "What kind of Action (practice) should it lead to?" This is a **creative process to envision the future from a new value**.



Fundamental and sustainable innovation that goes beyond superficial problem-solving can only emerge from this **constant reciprocating motion of Diving and Surfacing**. As systems thinker Donella Meadows has shown, the most powerful leverage points¹¹ for bringing about significant change in a social system lie not in changing physical elements, but in transforming the system's overall purpose and the underlying values. Interventions at the A and B levels are also important, but approaching the foundational C-Level is the most effective and essential intervention to bring about a true **paradigm shift**¹².

2.3 Integrating Plural Perspectives — The *Value-Relation Matrix*

By combining the three-level model of values (vertical axis) with **diverse stakeholders** (horizontal axis) to capture the *pluralism* of values discussed in the previous chapter, our framework expands into a two-dimensional **Value-Relation Matrix**^{*}.



Using this matrix, it becomes possible to structurally visualize multi-dimensional conflicts between values, bridge institutions, and practices. For example, a new business practice by a company (A-Level: Action) may align with the Core of shareholders (Stakeholder 1; C-

Level: maximization of short-term shareholder value), while causing a serious conflict with the Core of the local community where the business is based (Stakeholder 2; C-Level: long-term environmental sustainability and employment stability). Such complex relationships can be captured in a single picture

This analytical and generative framework frees us from the trap of intellectual paralysis in the face of complex problems. It provides a systematic thought process for visualizing the hard-to-see structure of values, discovering the essential issues at a deep level, and envisioning practices for the future.

⁹ Iceberg Model: A representative framework used in systems thinking. It posits that visible "Events" are merely the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface lie "Patterns," which are the trends of events; "Structure," the societal framework that produces these patterns; and at the deepest level, the "Mental Models," the consciousness and values of the people who accept that structure. It suggests that to address the root cause of a problem, it is necessary to intervene at a deeper level (Senge, 1990).

¹⁰ U Theory: A theory and practical method for individuals, organizations, and societies to generate essential transformations (emergence) that are not extensions of the past, proposed by Otto Scharmer of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). It posits that for transformation to occur, one must go through a process of descending to the bottom of the "U," which involves Suspending existing frameworks of thought, deeply Seeing (observing), connecting with one's inner Source to sense future possibilities (Presencing), and from there, embodying and launching new visions and actions (Realizing) (Scharmer & Senge, 2016).

¹¹ Leverage Points: A concept proposed by systems thinker Donella Meadows, referring to effective intervention points that can bring about significant changes in the behavior of a complex system. It is a metaphor for a "lever," indicating a point where a small force can produce a large change. Meadows argued that interventions such as changing physical numbers (e.g., tax rates) are less effective than changing the system's rules, information flows, and, most effectively, the overall purpose or underlying paradigm (values) of the system (Meadows, 1999).

¹² Paradigm Shift: A concept proposed by historian of science Thomas Kuhn in his 1962 work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn, 2012). It refers to the process where the "paradigm" (a framework of views and thoughts shared by a scientific community in a given era) that normal science presupposes is shaken by the accumulation of unexplainable cases and eventually undergoes a discontinuous, revolutionary transformation to a completely new paradigm. Today, the term is widely used not only in the world of science but also to refer to fundamental transformations in societal values and business models.

Chapter 3: The Intellectual Craft of Engaging with *Value* — A Renaissance of the Humanities

3.1 Specialised Knowledge in Value Inquiry and Its Practical Role

Engaging with *values* is not a matter of mere moralizing or personal heuristics, but a domain of specialized knowledge that the **humanities** have systematically explored for centuries. The humanities are a collection of academic disciplines aimed at understanding the *meaning* and *value* at the root of human behavior and thought

Specifically, the humanities provide various **lenses** for us to understand diverse value systems, relativize our own, and envision new ones. For example, history reveals the sources of contemporary values. Literature and the arts, by sharply depicting the hidden premises of society and expressing the subtleties of value that analytical language alone cannot capture, propose new ways of seeing the world, and anthropology challenges ‘common sense’ through cross-cultural comparisons. Furthermore, the humanities have also explored the pathways for inheriting and embedding these insights in society for the next generation.

Therefore, the mode of thinking presented in this paper can be seen as a contemporary application of these intellectual practices cultivated by the humanities over many years. In an era where technological evolution overturns the premises of society and where challenges that cannot be solved by economic rationality alone take center stage, its importance is greater than ever. The knowledge of the humanities, which deals with unquantifiable *meaning* and *value*, is an indispensable intellectual infrastructure for asking essential questions and envisioning new directions in practical areas, such as corporate purpose formulation, public policy planning, and technology design.

3.2 Philosophy’s Distinct Contribution: Questioning the Roots of Value and Constructing New Norms

Among the humanities, **philosophy** in particular is the discipline that has made it its mission most consciously and radically to re-examine the elements that form the **core** of our thought and action, such as values, worldviews, and ethical norms.

The contributions that philosophy can make to value inquiry can be summarized in the following four intellectual activities. These activities, however, play an important role not only in philosophy but also in other fields of the humanities, as well as in the work of outstanding scientists, artists, and practical leaders. However, philosophy can be said to provide important insights and methodologies for approaching fundamental questions about value in that it has made these activities themselves its object and has systematically refined its methodologies over several thousand years.

- **Visualizing and critically examining premises:** To question the basis of values that people unconsciously accept within organizations and society (e.g., *growth is fundamentally good*) and to expose their hidden assumptions and logical structures. This is a radical process of analysis that objectifies the foundation of our thinking.
- **Clarifying and redefining concepts:** To analyze rigorously the meaning of abstract concepts that are central to value, such as *happiness, justice, responsibility, and humanity*, and to redefine them in a contemporary context. This provides a common ground and language for discussions about value that may otherwise devolve into vague confrontations.
- **Structurally elucidating and promoting dialogue among diverse value systems:** To clarify structurally why and how different value systems clash. This provides a higher-order framework of thought to enable productive dialogue between different value systems, going beyond mere conflicts of opinion.
- **Envisioning and justifying new norms:** This is the most important role of philosophy in the contemporary world: based on the limitations of existing values, actively envisioning new ethical norms and value systems to support a more desirable society, and presenting their logical and ethical justification. **This is precisely the future-creating process that lies at the core of the idea advocated by the Kyoto Institute of Philosophy: "The mission of philosophy is the proposal of values."**

3.3 Disciplinary Crisis and the Need for *Recoupling with Practice*

However, we must frankly admit that the humanities, and philosophy in particular, have not always demonstrated their practical power. As a result of excessive specialization and disciplinary fragmentation, they have become disconnected from the complex challenges of real society, and in some quarters, their very reason for existence is being questioned—a **disciplinary crisis**. Knowledge detached from reality, no matter how sophisticated, cannot have the power to transform society.

To overcome this crisis and for the humanities to unleash their original potential, a ***recoupling with the front lines of practice***—in business, technology, and policy-making—is indispensable. The mode of thinking proposed in this paper and the movement based on it are a concrete framework and a call to promote this recoupling. The era of questioning *value* is an era in which the humanities can once again become the engine of social transformation. But this is not a return to a relationship where experts unilaterally teach answers. It is only when leaders struggling on the front lines of practice and experts of humanities knowledge cross their respective domains and join hands that new knowledge for paving the way to the future can be co-created.

Part II: Reading the Present through the Lens of Value — Case Studies and Future Envisioning

Purpose and Overview

In Part II, we apply the theoretical framework constructed in Part I to reality, achieving a shift from analysis to envisioning. The first half deciphers the complex challenges facing contemporary society through the *lens of value*, revealing essential structures that were invisible with conventional approaches. The second half, based on that analysis, presents a concrete societal vision—a *blueprint*—for creating the future. Through both analysis and envisioning, we demonstrate the practical effectiveness of thinking based on value.

Chapter Overviews

- **Chapter 4: Case Studies: Deciphering the Deep Structure of Contemporary Challenges:** Reframes representative challenges of modern society as two fundamental dynamics: *Fragmentation* and *Transformation*. It takes up geopolitical conflict and the erosion of democracy as cases of *Fragmentation*, and the redefinition of the concept of *human* brought about by the evolution of AI as a case of *Transformation*, analyzing their deep structures using the *ABC model*. This visualizes the conflicts and shifts in value behind superficial phenomena and presents a way of questioning aimed at fundamental solutions.
- **Chapter 5: Envisioning Value — A Blueprint for the Future:** This chapter envisions a *narrative of hope* for overcoming the contemporary crisis. First, it introduces the intellectual trend of *redefining value* occurring worldwide, organizing it into four main areas: the transformation of economic paradigms, the redefinition of human development and happiness, the philosophy of global justice and coexistence, and the ontological turn. Next, as a specific example, it details the philosophical concepts of *WE-Turn* (a shift from an individual-centered to a *we*-centered perspective) and the *Empty-Centered Structure* (a design principle for the coexistence of diverse values) proposed by Yasuo Deguchi. Finally, it discusses the need for the co-creation of diverse blueprints that can refer to these examples.

Chapter 4: Case Studies: Deciphering the Deep Structure of Contemporary Challenges

4.1. This Chapter's Perspective: The Mechanisms of *Fragmentation* and *Transformation*

How can the theoretical framework presented in Part I contribute to the analysis of complex real-world challenges? To demonstrate its utility, this chapter will use specific case studies to interpret the problems confronting contemporary society through the *lens of value*.

The analytical axes for this task are two mechanisms: ***Fragmentation*** and ***Transformation***. These are not mutually exclusive categories, but instead terms indicating two fundamental dynamics at play when *value* becomes a problem in the modern era.

- **Fragmentation:** Refers to the dynamic whereby existing value systems, having lost the common narrative that once bound them, collide and create intractable trade-offs. It primarily manifests as a **structure of conflict** between established values.
- **Transformation:** Refers to the dynamic whereby new technologies or changes in society and the environment shake the very foundations of existing value systems, compelling us to define or create new values. It manifests as a **process of fluctuation and reorganisation** of values.

In real-world social issues, these two dynamics are always intricately intertwined. For example, the *transformation* brought about by the advent of AI exacerbates the *fragmentation* between values prioritising *efficiency* and those prioritising *human dignity*. Conversely, geopolitical *fragmentation* accelerates a technology-hegemony race centred on national interests, promoting the *transformation* of society as a whole.

Based on this structural understanding, the following case studies will treat specific issues as interactions between *fragmentation* and *transformation* to elucidate the underlying value structures at their core. The case studies attempted in this chapter are not intended to present specific solutions. Rather, they aim to explore where the more fundamental issues lie, which have often been overlooked, by re-examining contemporary challenges through the *lens of value* proposed in this paper.

4.2. Case 1: The Structure of *Fragmentation* — Geopolitical Conflict and the Wavering of Democracy

The *fragmentation* that characterizes our era manifests most acutely in phenomena such as intensifying geopolitical conflict and the erosion of democracy in many nations. We believe that at their core lies a structural crisis of the very value systems that have supported our societies. The three-level model of this paper provides one effective

perspective for shedding light on this dimension of value.

First, at the root of the problem lies not a single factor but a dual structural change in the Core (core level): the erosion of the value base that has barely functioned as a common reference point for the international community, and the accompanying intensification of conflicts between competing values. The post-World War II international order, despite its many internal contradictions and conflicts, has managed to make normative values based on international law, such as the "prohibition of unilateral changes to the status quo by force" and "respect for universal human rights," function as a common reference point for the international community.

This dual dynamic of "loss of a common reference point" and *intensification of value conflicts* is key to deciphering contemporary fragmentation. On the geopolitical stage, as seen in the invasion of Ukraine and the Palestinian issue, individual claims such as *national security* or *historical legitimacy* are presented as grounds for overriding international norms. At a larger civilizational level, the tension between the universalist values originating from Western modernity and the cultural particularism asserted by the rising non-Western sphere¹³, including the Global South, as Samuel Huntington once discussed in terms of a *clash of civilizations*¹⁴, has sharpened, presenting a picture that could be called an era of *value multipolarization*. Furthermore, this value conflict is projected inward, appearing as a nation's *internal division* where values surrounding globalism and nationalism clash, as represented by the Trump phenomenon. All of these are the most acute manifestations of the "dysfunction of the grand narrative" that has been repeatedly discussed in this paper.

Second, this Core-level conflict is amplified by the collapse of the Bridge (mediation level). The *bridges* that should mediate value conflicts and integrate society are eroding both internationally and domestically. At the international level, institutions (formal Bridge) such as the United Nations and various international treaties are becoming dysfunctional due to shifts in the balance of power. At the domestic level, social norms (informal Bridge) such as a common understanding of facts and norms for dialogue are being corroded by the polarization of society through social media. With the loss of the Bridge that mediates Core conflicts, differences in values are transformed into incommunicable ruptures. This domestic division is deeply related to the rise of populism as a *Cultural Backlash*¹⁵ against the major trend of shifting from materialistic to self-expressive values, as pointed out by Ronald Inglehart and others. The generational conflict of values is eroding the very foundation of common dialogue.

Third, the conflict at the Core and the collapse of the Bridge erupt as a destructive *zero-sum game*¹⁶ at the Action (practice level). When the path of dialogue over values is closed, what remains is a struggle for power. In the international community, this appears as naked clashes of national interest over territory and economic advantage, such as military invasions and trade wars. Domestically, it becomes a struggle for political and cultural

hegemony, marked by severe conflicts over election results and the proliferation of hate speech. All these possess the structure of a zero-sum game, where one side's victory means the other's complete defeat.

Therefore, the question of how to overcome this *fragmentation* must be posed structurally. To ask merely *which value is correct?* is to participate in the zero-sum game at the Action level and will not lead to a fundamental solution. The real question lies in creating a future: "What kind of new Bridge needs to be envisioned and redesigned for these different value systems to coexist without destroying each other and to build a constructive relationship?" and, more fundamentally, **"Is it possible to create a higher-order value at the Core level that transcends this conflict structure itself?"**

4.3. Case 2: The Structure of *Transformation* — AI and the Redefinition of the Human

The explosive evolution of artificial intelligence, particularly generative AI, brings great benefits to society, but it also fundamentally destabilises values we have taken for granted. This technological *transformation* is not merely a matter of productivity improvement. It is a structural challenge to our value system itself, forcing us to redefine **what it means to be human** and **what intelligence is**.

First, at the root of the problem lies a fundamental unsettling of values at the Core. As historian Yuval Noah Harari has pointed out (Harari, 2017), when AI not only surpasses human capabilities but can also predict and manipulate our emotions and choices more accurately than we can ourselves, the very foundations of values that have supported modern society, such as *free will* and *humanity*, could collapse. Furthermore, the 20th-century values of *maximizing efficiency* and *productivity* becomes radicalized as an ideology (accelerationism¹⁷) that unconditionally venerates technological innovation and seeks to accelerate its evolution. However, this powerful current fundamentally clashes with the unquantifiable values that human society has nurtured, such as *human dignity*, *meaningful work*, and *cultural diversity*. This is less a clash between established values and more a situation where technological *transformation* is shaking the very foundations of the existing value system.

Second, this Core-level instability, due to the widespread absence of an effective Bridge (mediation level), is causing social confusion. Current copyright laws, educational systems, and corporate evaluation systems—the *bridges* of society—are designed on the tacit premise of human intellectual superiority. With the emergence of AI as a new form of intelligence, these Bridges are rapidly becoming obsolete. Social consensus and rules have not caught up with questions about the rights and responsibilities for AI-generated content, or the human capabilities truly needed in the age of AI. This *institutional design vacuum*, as pointed out by AI researchers like Stuart Russell,

highlights the danger of giving AI fixed objectives and the importance of maintaining alignment with human values (Russell, 2019).

Third, the instability at the Core and the absence of a Bridge manifest as a serious dilemma at the Action (practice level). Confusion over the use of AI in educational settings calls into question the essence of learning, and disputes over intellectual property in the creative industries shake the meaning of originality in expression. Companies face a difficult dilemma between the short-term productivity gains from AI adoption and the long-term risks of employee skill obsolescence and declining morale. This is a structural tension that arises when society tries to adapt to change without established new value standards.

Therefore, the question of how to navigate this *transformation* must also be posed structurally. To ask “should we stop the evolution of AI or not?” is an unproductive question trapped in an Action-level dilemma. The real questions exist on two levels. One is the practical question aimed at designing a new Bridge (education, law, ethical norms): “How can we responsibly embed the value of ‘humanity,’ which is wavering at the Core level, in a society of coexistence with AI?” And the other is the more fundamental, future-creating question: **In this era of technological transformation, what is the value of ‘humanity’ that we should still protect and uphold? And is it possible to place that value at the Core of future society?**

¹³ Universalism is the position that there are values and norms (e.g., human rights) that are equally valid for all humans and societies, regardless of culture or specific context. In contrast, Particularism is the position that the validity of values and norms is specific to the particular history, community, or cultural context in which they are rooted. These two positions have long formed a fundamental axis of conflict in international relations, political philosophy, and cultural anthropology. This paper does not treat them as a simple dichotomy but positions as a key challenge the question of how to creatively design a “Bridge” to mediate the tension between them.

¹⁴ The Clash of Civilizations: A hypothesis proposed by political scientist Samuel Huntington in a 1993 article (later expanded into a book) to analyze post-Cold War international politics (Huntington, 1996). He predicted that future major conflicts would not be based on ideological confrontations as in the Cold War era, but would occur along the cultural and religious fault lines between different “civilizations” such as Western, Islamic, Sinic, and Hindu. This theory sparked significant debate but remains an important reference point for understanding contemporary geopolitical conflicts as clashes of values.

¹⁵ Cultural Backlash: A phenomenon where, in response to long-term societal value changes toward liberal and cosmopolitan directions (e.g., secularization, acceptance of diversity, growth of self-expression values), a reactionary and authoritarian political movement or voting behavior strengthens among segments of the population who feel threatened by this rapid change. This counter-movement emphasizes values such as authority, tradition, order, and the homogeneity of their national culture. The concept was proposed by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris based on data analysis from the World Values Survey (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). It is widely referenced as a leading theoretical hypothesis to explain the rise of populism and severe political polarization in Western countries in recent years.

¹⁶ Zero-sum refers to a situation of appropriation where the sum of all participants' gains is zero (or constant), meaning one party's gain is necessarily another's loss. Plus-sum (or positive-sum) refers to a situation where cooperation and innovation can expand the total sum of gains, allowing all participants to benefit (albeit to varying degrees) (Neumann et al., 2007). This paper points out that "division" over values often falls into a zero-sum game structure and discusses the potential and importance of transforming this structure into a plus-sum game by redesigning the underlying Core (values) and Bridge (institutions/culture).

¹⁷ Accelerationism: An intellectual current that seeks to overcome the existing system and bring about a completely new society not by restraining, but by further accelerating the development of modern technology (especially AI) and the social system transformations it brings (especially capitalism). It is diverse in its content, ranging from radical positions like that of Nick Land, who advocates for accelerating the processes of capitalism to induce its self-destruction (Land et al., 2012), to more optimistic stances aiming for the early realization of a technological utopia (such as the "Effective Accelerationism" that has recently become influential in Silicon Valley), among a wide spectrum of variations.

Chapter 5: Envisioning Value — A Blueprint for the Future

5.1. From Analysis to Envisioning: Crafting a New *Narrative of Hope*

In the preceding chapters, we have analyzed the challenges facing contemporary society through the lens of *value* and unraveled the deep-seated structures of *fragmentation* and *transformation*. However, our purpose is not to criticize the past but to create the future. If we stop at analysis or criticism, we will not have fulfilled our responsibility to the future.

What is truly needed today, in a world shrouded in dark narratives of crisis and division where it has become difficult to envision a hopeful future, is a **hopeful narrative for the future that captivates people and inspires action.**

The philosophical concepts introduced in this chapter (Sections 5.3, 5.4) are specific examples that the Kyoto Institute of Philosophy has explored as a starting point. However, they are by no means the only answer. Rather, what this paper values most is that, by using these specific examples as a springboard, **each reader will begin to envision countless new blueprints, different from or surpassing these, in their own context or in collaboration with diverse actors.** The future will not emerge from a single blueprint but will richly manifest from the creative competition and dialogue of diverse visions.

5.2. Global Trends: Voices Calling for New Values

The vision presented in this paper is not the product of isolated contemplation. It resonates deeply with the intellectual trend of *redefining value* that is emerging simultaneously around the world in response to the contemporary crisis. These explorations are not scattered individually but are interconnected, converging into four major areas that illuminate the path to a more just and sustainable future.

1. Transformation of Economic Paradigms: Beyond Growth Supremacy

First is the movement to question the meaning of economic growth itself and to seek new economic systems. This includes the *Beyond GDP*¹⁸ trend that seeks alternative measures of prosperity, and *stakeholder capitalism*¹⁹, which emphasizes the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders. Furthermore, Kate Raworth's *doughnut economics*²⁰ envisions an economic sphere that satisfies both the limits of the global environment and social justice, while *degrowth communism*²¹ radically

advocates for a departure from economic growth for the sake of sustainability. These represent a fundamental challenge to conventional growth supremacy.

2. Redefinition of Human Development and Happiness: Questioning the Essence of Well-being

Second is the movement to shift the source of prosperity from material possessions to human inner fulfillment and potential. Amartya Sen's *capability approach*²² shed light on the potential of what a person "can do and can be." This idea has led to practical attempts such as the *World Happiness Report*²³ and the exploration of *well-being*²⁴, which comprehensively captures physical, mental, and social well-being, seeking to place human dignity back at the center of society. The Japanese concept of *ikiga*²⁵, which has recently gained international attention, is also part of this trend, and by integrally capturing not only a sense of happiness but also elements such as life's purpose, meaning, and social role, it offers an important perspective in the quest to restore human dignity to the center of society.

3. Philosophy of Global Justice and Coexistence: Re-recognition of Interdependence

Third is the movement that aims for global coexistence and presents a worldview different from Western modern individualism. *Ubuntu philosophy*²⁶ from Southern Africa and *Buen Vivir*²⁷ from South America, which preach deep human interdependence and harmony with nature, are gaining attention. These ideas resonate with the perspective of *post-colonialism*²⁸, which questions historical power structures, and the philosophy of the *commons*²⁹, which proposes jointly managing shared resources.

4. The Ontological Turn and the Re-integration of Values

Fourth are philosophical reconsiderations of socio-economic thoughts. Trends such as Markus Gabriel's *New Realism*³⁰ attempt to critically overcome the modern mode of thinking that separated facts and values. This movement provides a philosophical foundation for *ethical capitalism*³¹, which aims to reintegrate economic activity and ethics, and places the normative question of what kind of world we want to live in back at the center of our thinking.

5.3. An Example of Shifting Values and Worldviews: The *WE-Turn*

In response to these global trends, this paper introduces a new philosophical system constructed by Yasuo Deguchi, the co-chairperson of the Kyoto Institute of Philosophy, based on traditional East Asian values, as a specific example of a vision for fundamentally rewriting values (Deguchi, 2023, 2025, Forthcoming).

The intellectual journey begins with the recognition of one fundamental fact: no one can do anything alone. Even the most routine acts, such as speaking, walking, or eating, cannot be accomplished without the support of people, tools, nature, and society. This **fundamental inability to do anything alone** is, as Deguchi points out, the most essential condition we all share.

If so, what is the true agent that actually performs our actions? It is the interdependent network itself, woven by a diverse range of human and non-human entities (agents) that transcends the individual "I." This **multi-agent system** is the true stage where actions unfold, and it is the true subject.

This recognition revolutionizes our self-understanding. The true identity of the *acting subject* is this entire network of interdependence, that is, **WE**. The individual "I" is an important part of that network, but not the whole. The true nature of the *self* is, in fact, *WE*. This is the new image of the self that Deguchi presents: the **Self-as-WE**.*

When the perception of the self shifts from "I" to *WE*, everything in the world is seen from a different perspective. All values, such as freedom, responsibility, and happiness, are no longer *mine* but **ours**. This is a paradigm shift that fundamentally rewrites the values at the core of society (Core level), and Deguchi calls this transformation the **WE-Turn**.*

This new worldview holds the potential to dramatically change the concrete state of society (Bridge and Action levels). For example, the relationship between humans and AI will be transformed from a **master-slave model**, where humans use AI as a mere *tool*, to the **fellowship model***, where humans and AI collaborate as equal *partners* constituting a *WE*. By making this new relationship the foundation of society and redesigning laws, educational systems, and organizational rules to support it (transformation of the B-level), a future will be opened up where value can be co-created at a level previously impossible in fields such as medicine, research, and the arts (transformation of the A-level).

5.4. The *Chu-Ku* Structure: The Conditions for a *Good WE* and the Principle for Overcoming Division

However, positing *WE* as the subject raises a new question. Is there no danger that this *WE* could transform into a totalitarian *bad WE* that suppresses and homogenizes its own internal diversity? How can we build an open *good WE* that respects this internal plurality?

Deguchi's response to this question is another core concept: the ***Chu-ku (Empty-Centered) Structure***^{*}. It is both the internal condition for a *good WE* to be established and a universal organizing principle for the coexistence of diverse values in an age of division.

First, the *Chu-ku* structure refers to a **social structure in which no specific value system, individual, or group permanently monopolizes the center (Chu) of power or profit**. Structurally denying the asymmetry between the center and the periphery is the vision of society this philosophy aims for.

This idea is distinct from the postmodern *decentralization*, which focused on denying an absolute center and critically dismantling power structures. While decentralization often ended in the negative consequence of the *annihilation* of the center, the empty-centered structure gives a more positive and constructive role to the *center*.

At its core lies a seemingly paradoxical structure: the very fact that **there is nothing at the center** serves the most important function of uniting the *WE* as a whole. The *Ku* (emptiness) at the center refuses to be occupied by any specific value system or power. This very *absence* functions as a fair **anchoring point** for all subjects with diverse values. Because there is nothing, everyone can be involved, and by sharing that *emptiness* as a common reference point, a **Ba (place/field)** for creative dialogue and cooperation is born for the first time.

Therefore, the *Chu-ku structure* is not limited to the internal logic of a single value proposition, the *WE-Turn*. It has the potential to answer the fundamental question for our divided age: **How can different 'WE's, with their different value systems, coexist and engage in dialogue?**

If the *WE-Turn* is a proposal to shift the subject of value from "I" to *WE*, then the *Chu-ku structure* is a proposal for a flexible and powerful platform for those diverse subjects to

coexist and co-create.

5.5 Toward the Co-creation of Diverse Blueprints

Thus, one philosophical system provides a concrete lens and vocabulary for responding to contemporary challenges. However, our real challenge is not to stop at this one example. Rather, using the **pattern of envisioning** shown here as a reference, our inquiry must be opened in two directions.

The first is to expand our perspective to the **diverse intellectual traditions of the world**, with their different historical and cultural backgrounds. As shown by ideas that have already gained international attention, such as *Buen Vivir* and *Ubuntu*, there are powerful alternatives to Western modernity in the world. Our task is to learn from and dialogue with these diverse ideas, and even to excavate those that are not yet well known, and to **re-create** them in a contemporary context.

Second, and equally important, is the endeavor to **envision and create completely new values and narratives** to respond to the unique challenges of our time that cannot be overcome by referring to past traditions alone (e.g., coexistence with AI or the global environmental crisis).

The future we envision will achieve its true richness only when these two endeavors—the **re-creation of intellectual traditions** and the **creation of future values**—stimulate each other and engage in dialogue.

¹⁸ Beyond GDP: An international movement that seeks to assess the true prosperity and progress of society with more multifaceted indicators, which cannot be measured by economic indicators like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) alone (Stiglitz et al., 2009). This movement has a pioneering example in Bhutan's "Gross National Happiness (GNH)" concept from the 1970s, but it gained full momentum following a conference of the same name co-hosted by the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Club of Rome, the OECD, and the WWF in 2007. Representative examples include the OECD's "Better Life Index," the UN's "Human Development Index (HDI)," and the "World Happiness Report." In an era where the limits of economic growth are being debated, these attempts to incorporate elements such as environmental sustainability, social justice, and subjective happiness into policy objectives are gathering interest from governments worldwide.

¹⁹ *Stakeholder Capitalism* stands in contrast to *Shareholder Capitalism*, which places the maximization of shareholder value as the sole purpose of a company. Stakeholder Capitalism, instead, posits that the interests and well-being of a broader range of stakeholders should be at the core of corporate governance. This ideology, which developed the stakeholder theory proposed by R. Edward Freeman into a management philosophy (Freeman, 1984), has become a global trend, powerfully promoted by Klaus Schwab, chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF), against the backdrop of rising inequality and growing environmental concerns (Schwab & Vanham, 2021).

²⁰ Doughnut Economics: A conceptual model proposed by British economist Kate Raworth in 2012 to serve as a new economic compass for the 21st century (Raworth, 2017). It depicts the "social foundation" essential for all humanity to thrive without leaving anyone behind (food, water, education, justice, etc.) as an inner circle, and the "planetary boundaries," which are the environmental upper limits to avoid destabilizing the Earth's life-support systems, as an outer circle. It proposes that human economic activity should be contained within the doughnut-shaped "safe and just space" between these two circles.

²¹ Degrowth Communism: A radical intellectual and social movement that, based on the Earth's resource constraints and ecological limits, aims to transition from a dependence on quantitative economic growth, as represented by GDP, in a planned and democratic manner, to a socioeconomic system that prioritizes quality of life, equity, and ecological sustainability (Hickel et al., 2022; Saito, 2023). Unlike a mere economic recession or negative growth (i.e., a slump), it is characterized by redefining prosperity itself and envisioning a more just and sustainable society while reducing the scale of production and consumption.

²² Capability Approach: A normative evaluative framework for assessing people's well-being, poverty, and social development. It focuses not on the amount of income or resources people possess, but on "what a person is able to do or be"—the set of an individual's substantive freedoms and possibilities (capabilities). It was founded by Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen and further developed by philosopher Martha Nussbaum, among others (Nussbaum, 2011; A. Sen, 1999). It has had a significant impact on international development and public policy, for instance, by providing the theoretical foundation for the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI).

²³ World Happiness Report: An annual report published by the UN's Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and it is an influential survey that provides international comparisons of national happiness levels. While based on people's subjective well-being (life evaluation), it analyzes the background using multifaceted factors such as per capita GDP, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption. It is one of the representative practical examples of the "Beyond GDP" movement, which attempts to directly measure well-being rather than focusing on economic

indicators like GDP.

²⁴ Well-being: A concept that integrally refers to a "good state" in multiple domains, including health (physical), happiness (psychological), and good social relationships (Huppert et al., 2007). It goes beyond the mere absence of illness or unhappiness (the absence of ill-being) to comprehensively capture a state where an individual is fully realizing their potential and leading a satisfying, meaningful life. In recent years, it has been positioned as an important goal in policy (e.g., New Zealand's well-being budget) and corporate management (e.g., health and productivity management), as a concept deeply related not only to individual happiness but also to organizational productivity and social sustainability.

²⁵ Ikigai: A concept originating from Japanese, representing a purpose or meaning in life, a reason for being (Kamiya, 2004; Mathews, 1996). In recent years, it has gained international attention as "ikigai" and is being studied as a significant concept, particularly in Western happiness studies and well-being research. In an international context, it is often illustrated as the intersection of four overlapping circles: "passion," "mission," "vocation," and "profession," and is understood as a concept that integrates work and life's meaning. However, the traditional Japanese concept of ikigai is not necessarily tied to a profession and is a more comprehensive concept that includes a broader sense of fulfillment in life and connection with society, thus having subtle differences from its international interpretation.

²⁶ Ubuntu: A word originating from the Zulu and Xhosa languages of Southern Africa, an ethical philosophy and worldview centered on deep human interdependence, community, and compassion, often translated as "I am because we are." It emphasizes values such as harmony, empathy, tolerance, and solidarity within the community over individual autonomy and rights. It became known globally when Archbishop Desmond Tutu and others championed this ideal as the spiritual pillar for national reconciliation and conciliation in post-apartheid South Africa (Metz, 2011; Shutte, 2001).

²⁷ Buen Vivir: A Spanish phrase meaning "good living" or "wonderful life," a social ideal derived from the worldviews and philosophies of indigenous peoples of the Andean region of South America, such as the Quechua (Acosta, 2013; Gudynas, 2011). Instead of endlessly pursuing Western-style "development"—i.e., economic growth and material wealth—it aims for a more comprehensive and harmonious prosperity that includes community harmony, coexistence with nature, cultural diversity, and spiritual fulfillment. This ideal garnered significant international attention when it was enshrined as a guiding principle of the state in the constitutions of Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2009).

²⁸ Postcolonialism: A broad intellectual current that critically analyzes and examines the political, economic, and cultural impacts and power structures left by former colonialism not only in post-independence societies

but also in former colonial powers. Edward Said's *Orientalism*, published in 1978, is known as a representative work, exposing how the West represented the "Orient" in a prejudiced manner to justify its dominance. It aims to question the very nature of Eurocentric knowledge and to restore the oppressed perspectives and voices of the non-Western world (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon et al., 2005; Spivak, 1994).

²⁹ Commons: The entirety of resources shared, co-managed, and used by a specific community, as well as the social and cultural institutions and practices that support this management. Traditionally, it referred to natural resources like pastures, forests, and fisheries, but today, artificial and cultural resources such as knowledge, academic research, data, software (e.g., open source), and urban spaces are also actively discussed as "digital commons" or "knowledge commons." Political economist Elinor Ostrom showed that the "tragedy of the commons" does not always occur and that commons can be used sustainably through autonomous rule-setting and management by the community, for which she was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 2009 (Ostrom, 1990, 2010).

³⁰ New Realism: A trend in 21st-century contemporary philosophy that opposes the excesses of "constructivist" philosophies (such as postmodernism), which regard the world as being constructed by the human mind or language, and seeks to reaffirm an objective reality that exists independently of the human mind. German philosopher Markus Gabriel and Italian philosopher Maurizio Ferraris are known as its main proponents (Ferraris, 2014; Gabriel, 2015a, 2015b). Gabriel's position, in particular, is characterized by recognizing a unique "reality" not only for physical objects but also for domains such as meaning, values, and norms, attempting to overcome the modern dualism that separates facts and values.

³¹ Ethical Capitalism: A viewpoint that, while acknowledging the dynamism of the free market, insists that its activities can and must be compatible with ethical norms and principles of social justice. Although it has intellectual roots tracing back to Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, it has recently regained attention with the growing interest in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) investing. It aims to actively integrate ethics into the core of business models and corporate strategy, going beyond mere philanthropy or legal compliance.

Part III: Agenda for the Future

Purpose and Overview

In Part III, we move from vision to practice and crystallize the analyses and visions developed so far into concrete action guidelines for real-world social transformation. Here, we present four agendas that can be shared by leaders, practitioners, creators, educators, and citizens across all sectors. These are not finished *answers* but rather function as the most practical and essential *open questions* we can share in an age of fragmentation and transformation.

Chapter Overview

- **Chapter 6: Four Agendas for Enacting the Future:** Presents concrete action guidelines for putting the arguments of this paper into practice. Through four agendas—(1) Focus on Values, (2) Unite Foundational Inquiry and Praxis, (3) Leverage the Humanities, and (4) Build a Value Co-creation Network—it clarifies the path of social transformation in an age of fragmentation and transformation. These serve as guidelines for continuous inquiry and practice, encouraging application in the diverse contexts of the reader.

Chapter 6: Four Agendas for Enacting the Future

Through the discussions so far, we have argued that at the root of the complex challenges facing contemporary society lies the problem of *value*, and we have discussed the importance of a mode of thinking to decipher its structure and envision a new future, as well as the philosophy and humanities that support its practice.

To ensure that analysis and vision do not end as mere speculative play, we present a set of concrete and essential action guidelines (agendas) to be shared by all leaders, practitioners, creators, educators, and citizens who aim for fundamental social transformation.

The Four Agendas

- **Focus on Values:** When faced with complex social issues, we tend to jump to symptomatic remedies. But fundamental transformation begins with focusing on the *values* at the root of the problem and thoroughly re-examining **what we truly consider important**. Short-term profit or long-term sustainability? Efficiency or human dignity? To place these fundamental questions of value at the center of our thinking, prior to the formulation of any strategy or action plan is the foundation of all agendas.
- **Unite Foundational Inquiry and Praxis:** The fundamental questions surrounding value, by themselves, risk becoming speculation detached from reality. It is essential to constantly connect these questions with the concrete level of *praxis*—real-world organisational management, technological development, policy decisions, and the creation of educational programs and artistic works—and to repeat the cycle of *Diving* and *Surfacing*. Concrete challenges in practice provide a sense of reality for questioning values, and the quest for value deepens practice to a more fundamental level. The ABC model presented in this paper is one effective framework for analyzing the current situation in this **creative reciprocating motion between foundational inquiry and praxis**.
- **Leverage the Humanities:** To intellectually deepen and enrich this reciprocating movement, we will actively utilise the insights of the humanities, not merely as *liberal arts* but as practical *intellectual weapons*. In particular, philosophy demonstrates its true value as an indispensable intellectual technology for questioning values from their roots and envisioning new norms. This is also an attempt to *recouple* the

knowledge of academia, which has been estranged from the front lines of practice, with the forefront of social transformation.

- **Build a Value Co-creation Network***: Finally, the quest concerning value is by no means an activity that can be completed by an individual or a single organisation. Such closed-door exploration can become a breeding ground for the unilateral imposition of values and the formation of new divisions. To build a *network for value co-creation* where diverse actors from across sectors, borders, and generations can collaborate and engage in dialogue and trial and error will itself become the most powerful movement for creating a hopeful future in an age of fragmentation and transformation

Final Chapter: Toward a Vision of a Multilayered Society of Values

Final Chapter: Toward a Vision of a *Multilayered Society of Values*

This paper has shown that the problem of *value* lies at the root of the crises facing contemporary society and has presented a framework of thought for addressing these structural challenges. To conclude, let us present a clear direction and a hopeful vision for overcoming this era of fragmentation and transformation.

The vision we propose is that of a *Multilayered Society of Values*.

This is not a utopia dominated by a single value system, but a social model that re-frames the *pluralism* of different values coexisting in society and the *multilayeredness* that individual subjects hold within, as discussed in this paper, not as a problem but as a source of social richness. It refers to a dynamic and creative way of being for a society that acknowledges the coexistence of different values, promotes dialogue among them, and at times creates new value from their tensions.

This society is not realised as a static ideal state, but through the following three ongoing activities:

- **Reflective Practice:** All organisations and individuals constantly question the values (Core) underlying their actions and confront their own internal multilayeredness of values.
- **Dialogic Co-creation:** Through dialogue with others who hold different values, deepen mutual understanding and jointly build shareable goals, institutions, and norms (Bridge).
- **Generative Innovation:** Transform value clashes and conflicts not into destructive fragmentation but into creative energy for generating new practices (Action).

The realisation of a multilayered society of values cannot be accomplished by a few leaders or experts alone. It will be woven by an autonomous network of business managers, policymakers, researchers, artists, educators, religious leaders, and each and every citizen who practices the four agendas presented in this paper in their own respective fields and communities.

Beyond that, we aim for the construction of a *Network of Networks* that connects these

individual networks of value inquiry and allows them to learn from each other. Bringing together the new currents of value-seeking that are emerging simultaneously around the world and accelerating global dialogue and co-creation, that is the crucial approach to realizing the vision presented in this paper.

We hope that this paper will serve as a reliable first step in that grand and essential quest.

Appendix: Glossary

Concept	Definition and Explanation	Relevance to Contemporary Society
Multilayered Society of Values	A vision of value pluralism and multilayeredness as a source of social richness that operates dynamically through dialogue and creative tension. It presupposes that even individuals may have internal layers of conflicting values.	In a world of increasing globalization and deepening fragmentation, this is a social model for subjects with different values to coexist and co-create.
ABC Model	A model for structurally analyzing social issues in three levels: the visible Action level, the underlying Core level (values), and the mediating Bridge level consisting of formal <i>institutions</i> and informal <i>social forms</i> .	For complex social issues where merely technical solutions often fail (e.g., climate change or economic inequality), it provides a cognitive foothold to visualize deep structures and envision fundamental change.
Diving / Surfacing	A repeated process of analytical <i>diving</i> from surface issues (A-Level) to background institutions (B-Level)	In organizational design and policy-making, it enables sustainable and

Concept	Definition and Explanation	Relevance to Contemporary Society
	and root values (C-Level), and creative <i>surfacing</i> to redesign future institutions and practices based on reconsidered values.	fundamental change, not just ad-hoc solutions, by iterating between current state analysis (Diving) and vision creation (Surfacing).
Value-Relation Matrix	An analytical tool that visualizes "whose values, at which layer," are in conflict or harmony by combining the ABC Model (vertical axis) with diverse stakeholders (horizontal axis).	In social issues with complex interests at stake, it provides a basis for dialogue to seek positive-sum solutions by objectively grasping the structure of value conflicts.
Self-as-WE	A view of the self that redefines the agent of action not as an isolated "I" but as a complete interdependent network of diverse human and non-human entities—others, nature, tools, AI—i.e., <i>WE</i> .	As human-centric, individualistic views of the self reach their limits, this provides a basis for envisioning new values and responsibilities that include both humans and non-humans, for issues like environmental problems

Concept	Definition and Explanation	Relevance to Contemporary Society
		and AI coexistence.
WE-Turn	A normative value proposition that the axis of all thought and practice should shift from being "I"-centered to <i>we</i> -centered. Happiness and rights are also redefined within the context of the <i>WE</i> .	In an era where deepening individualism leads to social division and isolation, this functions as a guideline for an alternative social approach to rebuild shared purposes and community.
Chu-ku (Empty-Centered) Structure	An ethical principle that creates a <i>ba</i> (place/field) for fair participation and dialogue by keeping the <i>center</i> of interests <i>empty</i> so that no specific power or value system can permanently monopolize it. It is also a governance theory for the coexistence of diverse values.	In an age where centralized governance is failing and social media creates new divisions, this serves as a principle for designing decentralized and open public spheres and platforms.
Fellowship Model	An alternative to the "master-slave model" which sees AI as merely a <i>tool</i> for human use. The fellowship	In an era where AI may surpass human intelligence, This is an ethical and social

Concept	Definition and Explanation	Relevance to Contemporary Society
	model is a vision of institutions where humans and AI, as equal <i>fellows</i> constituting a <i>we</i> , collaborate by complementing each other's abilities.	vision for building a symbiotic relationship, not one of domination/subordination, and for redefining human dignity.
Value Co-creation Network	An open collaborative platform for diverse actors jointly to explore and create new values through dialogue, transcending boundaries of organization, sector, nation, and generation.	For global challenges that cannot be solved by a single organization or nation, this is a social mechanism for leveraging collective intelligence to co-create solutions through continuous learning and trial-and-error.

Bibliography

- Acosta, A. (2013). *El Buen Vivir: Sumak Kawsay, una oportunidad para imaginar otro mundo*. Icaria editorial.
- Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*. Harper & Row.
- Berlin, I. (1969). *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford University Press.
- Berlin, I., & Banville, J. (2013). *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas - Second Edition* (H. Hardy, Ed.). Princeton University Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Cascio, J. (2020, April 29). Facing the Age of Chaos. *Medium*.
<https://medium.com/@cascio/facing-the-age-of-chaos-b00687b1f51d>
- Chang, R. (Ed.). (1997). *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason*. Harvard University Press.
- Deguchi, Y. (2023). From Incapability to We-Turn. In A. Zwitter & T. Dome (Eds.), *Meta-Science: Towards a Science of Meaning and Complex Solution* (pp. 41–70). University of Groningen Press.
- Deguchi, Y. (2025). The WE-turn of Value: Principles. *The Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 614, 1–43.
- Deguchi, Y. (Forthcoming). The WE-turn of Action: Principles. *Open Philosophy*.

- Fanon, F., Bhabha, H. K., & Sartre, J.-P. (2005). *The Wretched of the Earth* (R. Philcox, Trans.; Reprint). Grove Press.
- Ferraris, M. (2014). *Manifesto of New Realism*. SUNY Press.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Harpercollins College Div.
- Gabriel, M. (2015a). *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Gabriel, M. (2015b). *Why the World Does Not Exist* (G. Moss, Trans.). Polity.
- Gabriel, M., Horn, C., Katsman, A., Krull, W., & Lippold, A. L. (2023). *Towards a New Enlightenment: The Case for Future-oriented Humanities*. Transcript Verlag.
- Gudynas, E. (2011). Buen Vivir: Today's Tomorrow. *Development*, 54(4), 441–447.
- Harari, Y. N. (2017). *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (Illustrated). Harper.
- Hickel, J., Klu, K., & Read, R. (2022). *Less Is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World*. Windmill Books.
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon & Schuster.
- Huppert, F., Baylis, N., & Keverne, B. (Eds.). (2007). *The Science of Well-Being*. Oxford University Press.
- Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2019). *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian*

- Populism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kamiya, E. (2004). *Ikigai ni tsuite [On Ikigai]* (生きがいについて) . Mizsuzu Shobo.
- Kern, A.-B., & Morin, E. (1993). *Terre-Patrie*. SEUIL.
- Kuhn, T. S. (2012). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.
- Land, N., Mackay, R., & Brassier, R. (2012). *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007*. Urbanomic / Sequence Press.
- Li, D. (2014). *Value Theory: A Research into Subjectivity*. Springer.
<https://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-642-25617-2>
- Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Mackey, R. H. (1992). *Translating Vision Into Reality: The Role of the Strategic Leader*. U.S. Army War College.
- Mathews, G. (1996). *What Makes Life Worth Living?: How Japanese and Americans Make Sense of Their Worlds*. University of California Press.
- Meadows, D. H. (1999). *Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System*. The Sustainability Institute.
- Metz, T. (2011). Ubuntu as a Moral Theory and Human Rights in South Africa. *African*

Human Rights Law Journal, 11(2), 532–559.

Neumann, J. V., Morgenstern, O., Kuhn, H. W., & Rubinstein, A. (2007). *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (Anniversary). Princeton Univ Pr.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Harvard University Press.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2013). *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Reprint). Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2016). *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Reprint). Princeton Univ Pr.

Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge University Press.

Ostrom, E. (2010). Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems. *American Economic Review*, 100(3), 641–672.

Raworth, K. (2017). *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*. Random House Business.

Russell, S. (2019). *Human Compatible: Artificial Intelligence and the Problem of Control*. Viking.

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon.

Saito, K. (2023). *Marx in the Anthropocene: Towards the Idea of Degrowth*

Communism. Cambridge University Press.

Scharmer, O., & Senge, P. (2016). *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Schwab, K., & Vanham, P. (2021). *Stakeholder Capitalism: A Global Economy that Works for Progress, People and Planet*. Wiley.

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press.

Sen, A. K. (2007). *Identity And Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Reprint). W W Norton & Co Inc.

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Doubleday.

Shutte, A. (2001). *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*. Cluster Publications.

Spivak, G. C. (1994). Can the Subaltern Speak? In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (pp. 66–111). Columbia University Press.

Stiglitz, P. J. E., Sen, P. A., & Fitoussi, P. J.-P. (2009). *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*.

Taylor, C. (1992). *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Reprint). Harvard University Press.

Taylor, C. (1994). *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton

University Press.

Tooze, A. (2019). *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World*. Viking.

Tooze, A. (2021). *Shutdown: How Covid Shook the World's Economy*. Viking.

Tutu, D. (1999). *No Future Without Forgiveness*. Doubleday.

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. (No. 70/1). UN General Assembly Resolution.