THE UNWORTHINESS OF NIETZSCHEAN VALUES

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Introduction

In *The Genealogy of Values: The Aesthetic Economy of Nietzsche and Proust* (1995), I contrasted Nietzsche’s and Proust’s language of values to Plato’s language of the Good. Since Plato is often dismissed as metaphysical, my critique of values-discourse was thought to depend upon Platonic metaphysics, against which Nietzsche devoted his life to overcome. In this paper, I should like to compare Nietzsche to another thinker who prided himself on overcoming Platonic metaphysics, namely, Martin Heidegger and to contrast the former’s language of values (*Werte*) to the latter’s language of worthiness (*Würdigkeit*) or dignity (*Würde*). I do this not to exalt the prudence of Heidegger’s judgment\(^1\) in contrast to the imprudence of Nietzsche’s but to get readers to reflect on the difference between Nietzsche’s ready affirmation of values-discourse and Heidegger’s rejection of it without dismissing this difference as grounded in metaphysics or political ideology.

However, to clarify this distinction at the outset, I shall refer to the boldest of English philosophers. In chapter ten of *Leviathan*, Hobbes wrote: “The Value, or WORTH of a man, is as of all other things, his Price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependant on the need and judgment of another.” Hobbes is often deprecated for thinking that human value depends on the laws of supply and demand or for denying “objective values” or “absolute values.” Hobbes was simply avoiding what he called “insignificant speech.” Later in chapter ten, Hobbes wrote: “WORTHINESSE, is a thing different from the worth, or value of a man; and also from his merit, or desert; and consisteth in a particular power, or ability for that, whereof he is said to be worthy: which particular ability, is named FITNESSE, or Aptitude.”\(^2\) Immanuel Kant, who has the reputation of a lofty idealist opposed to the low materialism of Hobbes, distinguished *value* from *worthiness* or *dignity* in his formulation of the categorical imperative: “In the Kingdom of ends everything has either Value [*Preis*] or Dignity [*Würde*]. Whatever has a value can be replaced by something else which is equivalent; whatever, on the other hand, is above all value, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity.” For Kant, human beings have an intrinsic worthiness that exempts them from market evaluation; *Preis* is *relativen Wert*, while *Würde* is *innern Wert*.\(^3\)

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1 For my critical assessment of Heidegger’s politics, see Edward Andrew, “Heidegger’s *Führerprinzip: Leadership out of and into Nihilism*” in Joseph Masciulli, Mikhail Molchanov and W. Andy Knight eds. (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 123-34.
Kant thought economics a part of moral and political philosophy, and were aware that values only manifest themselves through market exchange or the price system, a view that prevailed until the time of John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx. The category of value only enters into Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy* at Book III, “Exchange.” Values-discourse only entered philosophy in the mid to late nineteenth century in the neo-Kantianism of the Marburg and Heidelberg schools of *Geistwissenschaft*; Rudolph Hermann Lotze was the dominant figure in exporting *Wertphilosophie* to the French and English-speaking philosophers, and through the German sociologists inspired by them. Although Lotze’s central categories were *Werte* (values) and *Geltung* (validity), Lotze knew nothing about economics or money (*Geld*). Although Nietzsche was not the first philosopher to know nothing about economics, he was the first political philosopher to be sublimely ignorant or gaily unaware of the “dismal science”; “to know nothing about trade is noble.” Nietzsche was also the first political philosopher to use the language of values outside the realm of market evaluation.

We take the language of values for granted and tend to represent our experiences of the holy, the good, the beautiful and the true as religious, moral, aesthetic and cognitive values. We tend to forget how recently the language of values has become hegemonic in our world of discourse. After the First World War, Harvard-educated social scientists spoke of *values*, indicating the German origin of their professors that taught them this key term of social science that Max Weber borrowed from Nietzsche. The etymology of *value*, from the Latin *valeo*, to be in good health, strong and able, and related to *validus*, sound or healthy, is suggestive of Nietzschean vitalism. However, I wish to indicate how talk of our values is symptomatic of an unsound and unhealthy culture, and will be using Heidegger’s critique of Nietzsche’s evaluative philosophy in this project. Truth, beauty, goodness and holiness have converses; “values” do not. One can say a Nazi is evil but one cannot say he lacks values. One can say an objective is valueless (having zero value but not negative value) or one can say that a person lacks values (usually meaning that the person is wholly preoccupied with her interests, or is Madonna’s material girl) but values-discourse deprives us of robust antitheses to truth, goodness, beauty and sanctity. Perhaps conditioned by the etiolated neo-Kantian idealism from which the language of values originated, “values” distort human life by idealization, by presenting what people live for as lofty ideals we present to others. We may say that we live for wine, women and song, and may find multiple orgasms, medium rare roast beef, or the scent of the sea important components of the good life, but we don’t say that they are our values (except perhaps in pub discussions or perhaps as a cynical rejoinder to politicians orating about Canadian values). In the language of classical political economy, “values” are exchange-values, what we present to others, not use-

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values, what we enjoy for ourselves.\textsuperscript{7} “Values”, understood as lofty ideals, tend to diminish our fundamental attachments, our loves and loyalties. What one values is not what one loves or needs. “Values” are options; they lack the graceless urgency of need or the graceful compulsion of love. “Values”, I shall argue, are the products of relativistic estimation but are wrongly presented as something universal, absolute or objective. Whereas one may stand or even die for principle, “values” are the stuff of trade-offs, bargaining and negotiation. “Values” adequately express the options of a moral marketplace and the compromises and accommodations necessary to live together, despite “the fact of plurality” or irreconcilable moral and cultural differences. However, values-discourse militates against the search for a common good or goods, against universal principles and against the universal provision of public services.

Nietzsche on the Inherently Subjective Nature of Values

Nietzsche boldly asserted that all values arise from evaluation: "nothing is valuable 'in itself'."\textsuperscript{8} He poked fun at those who thought that "values were inherent in things and all one had to do was grasp them."\textsuperscript{9} For Nietzsche, nothing is naturally good or intrinsically worthy: “Whatever has value in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature -- nature is always valueless, but has been given value at some time, as a present -- and it was we who gave and bestowed it.”\textsuperscript{10} Nietzsche’s values-discourse derives from his claim “that there are no moral facts whatever.”\textsuperscript{11} He declared: “My chief proposition: there are no moral phenomena, there is only a moral interpretation of these phenomena.”\textsuperscript{12} Indeed Nietzsche’s Zarathustra asserted that “this creating, willing, valuing ego...is the measure and value of all things.”\textsuperscript{13}

Nietzsche’s perspectivism consists in the claim that there are no facts but only interpretations. There are no facts evident to the senses or reason: we experience meanings to be interpreted; “our very sense perceptions are permeated with value judgments.”\textsuperscript{14} Since “there is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective ‘knowing’,”\textsuperscript{15} Nietzsche insisted that “all evaluation is made from that of a definite perspective: that of the preservation of the individual, a community, a race, a church, a faith, a culture.”\textsuperscript{16} All value is “relative meaning and perspective:

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid, p. 226.
\textsuperscript{12} Nietzsche, \textit{Will to Power}, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{14} Nietzsche, \textit{Will to Power}, p. 275.
\textsuperscript{16} Nietzsche, \textit{Will to Power}, p. 149.
our values are interpreted into things.”\textsuperscript{17} All values are relative to specific sociological and historical perspectives: values “that are not transitory, do not exist.”\textsuperscript{18} We evaluate from the perspective of our lives, and “there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspective estimates and appearances,” thus giving the lie to the “prejudice that truth is worth more than mere appearance.”\textsuperscript{19} Nietzsche insisted that the idea of values as perspectival interpretations to enhance life as will to power “permeates my writings.”\textsuperscript{20}

Values are the subjectification of the Platonic good. “Plato. . .convinced himself that the "good" as he desired it was not the good of Plato but the "good in itself," the eternal treasure that some man, named Plato, had chanced to discover on the way!”\textsuperscript{21} Nietzsche's values-discourse is an attack on what Plato held to be intrinsically good. Plato was blind to think his good was the good: what he desired was falsely presented as what is inherently good; what he created through his particular desires was portrayed as what he discovered by means of our common reason. For Nietzsche, values are particular, contingent or idiosyncratic, not universal, essential or common to humanity. Values are projections of the imagination, not receptions of the intelligence. Values are created by unique acts of will, not discovered by our common reason. Values are not simply opinions about what is good (such as appear at the beginning of a Platonic dialogue) but declarations of will, assertions of self-identity. Rather than inviting discussion in the manner of a philosophic conversation, an assertion of “These are my values” appears more as an indication to like it or lump it and put up one’s dukes if one doesn’t; assertion of values closes off the possibility of dialogue or a critical appraisal of one’s own opinions. On the other hand, values are the stuff of trade offs and negotiations. One stands, falls or dies on principle but, as Heidegger stated, “No one dies for mere values.”\textsuperscript{22}

The limit to Nietzschean values-discourse is the valueless and the invaluable. Since values are relativistic estimation, things and persons stand in relationships of "what is more or less valuable."\textsuperscript{23} Values are relative; they stand in a relationship of better and worse, more or less. Equal value is no value.\textsuperscript{24} The invaluable cannot be evaluated: “the value of life cannot be estimated.”\textsuperscript{25} Nietzsche is not referring to the invaluable dignity or the pricelessness of an

\textsuperscript{17} Nietzsche, \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{18} Nietzsche, \textit{Thus spoke Zarathustra}, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{19} Nietzsche, \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{20} Nietzsche, \textit{Will to Power}, p. 330.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 510.
individual life, which may have greater or less value in serving to bring to birth the overman. In a manner reminiscent of Hobbes, Nietzsche wrote: “To estimate what a type of man is worth, one must calculate the price paid for his preservation.” All civilization is based on the relative estimation of the value of human lives. As distinct from individual lives or civilizations, life in general, as the will to power, cannot be measured because there is nothing with which to compare it; things in the world can be estimated, compared or measured but not the world itself. Values, as conditions and ways of life, can be determined by induction and comparison, but life itself is invaluable, incalculable. “The total value of the world cannot be evaluated.”

To be sure, Nietzsche thought irrational estimates of life will constantly be made, issuing either from health, confidence and strength or sickness, diffidence and weakness. To such irrational evaluators, Nietzsche counseled: “If you have hitherto believed that life was once of the highest value [Wert] and see yourself disillusioned [enttäuscht], do you at once have to reduce it to the lowest possible price.”

Nietzsche’s evaluative thought is governed by mercantile exchange [Tausch], despite his lofty contempt for it. Thinking is a process “of setting prices, determining values, contriving equivalences, exchanging [tauschen].” Commerce is both exchange [tauschen] and deceit [täuschen]. Hermes/Mercury (where we get the words merchant and mercantile) was the god of both trade and lying. Merchants bridge different worlds but they do so not simply to expand horizons of meaning in the manner of Gadamer or to open channels of transparent communication in Habermas’s ideal world but also to make money and thus buyers were warned to beware of shoddy or overpriced goods. Hermeneutics (from Hermes) is the art of interpreting what is hidden; it gathers together communication through the veil of illusion, or is the commerce of strangers. Merchants have been instinctively drawn towards the central premise of Nietzsche’s values-discourse, namely, “that art is worth more than truth.”

Although Nietzsche thought man the undefined animal, a creator with a history not a creature with a nature, he sometimes provided a trans-historical definition of man as the measurer [der Messende], the estimator [der Schätzende], or the evaluator. “Perhaps all the morality of mankind has its origin in the tremendous inner excitement which seized on primeval men when they discovered measure and measuring, scales and weighing (the word Mensch,

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28 Ibid, p. 70.
31 Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, p. 215. I have changed the translation of *enttäuscht* from “disappointed” to “disillusioned” for reasons that will emerge in the following paragraphs.
33 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 453.
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Indeed, means the measurer, he desired to name himself after his greatest discovery).”\(^{34}\) We might note Nietzsche’s creative etymology of Mensch, presumably from the Latin mensurare (measure) and mens (mind), rather than the Old High German mennisc (manlike). However, Nietzsche’s point was that evaluative thought combined measuring and esteeming in estimating.

Setting prices, determining values [Werte abmessen], contriving equivalences, exchanging, these preoccupied the earliest thinking of man to so great an extent that in a certain sense they constitute thinking as such: here it was that the oldest kind of astuteness developed; here likewise, we may suppose, did human pride, the feeling of superiority have its finest beginning. Perhaps our word Mensch (manas) still expresses something of precisely this feeling of self-satisfaction: man designated himself as the creature that measures values, evaluates and measures, as the “valuating animal as such” [Werte misst, wertet und misst als das ‘abschätzende Tier an sich’].\(^{35}\)

Heidegger’s Rejection of Nietzschean Values

In place of Nietzsche trans-historical definition of man, Heidegger provided a historical definition of humanity to encompass the metaphysics of subjective evaluation.

Self-willing man everywhere reckons with things and men with objects. What is reckoned becomes merchandise... Self-assertive man lives by staking his will. He lives by risking his nature in the vibration of money and the currency of values. As this constant trader and middleman, man is the “merchant”. He weighs and measures constantly, yet does not know the real weight of things.\(^{36}\)

Heidegger thought the language of values derives from a subject/object dichotomy that is used pragmatically by science and social science but frames experience in such a way that be cannot see outside the framework; we lose the primal experience of what is and the freshness of the pre-Socratic reflections on our world. In his most extended critique of values-discourse, Heidegger wrote:

To think against “values” is not to maintain that everything interpreted as “a value”–“culture,” “art,” “science,” “human dignity,”[Menschenwürde] “world,” and “God”–is valueless. Rather, it is important finally to realize that precisely through the characterization of something as “a value” what is so valued is robbed of its worth [als “Wert” das so Gewertete seiner Würde beraubt wird]. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as an object for man’s estimation. But what a thing is in its Being is not exhausted by its being an object, particularly when objectivity takes the form of value. Every valuing, even when it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid [gelten] – solely as the objects of its doing. When one proclaims “God” the altogether “highest
value,” this is a degradation of God’s essence. Here as elsewhere thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against Being. To think against values does not mean to beat the drum for the valuelessness and nullity of beings. It means to bring the clearing of the truth of Being before thinking, as against subjectivizing beings into mere objects.\textsuperscript{37}

Heidegger’s attack on the Nietzschean language of values was an insistence that the world does not consist solely of objects for willful mastery, that human and non-human beings are not simply human and natural resources in an economy of galloping consumption, and the question of Being or “To be or not to be” is worthy of our consideration, and not to be dismissed as empty or vacuous by positivistic science.

However, what did Heidegger mean when he said that to call something a value is to rob it of its intrinsic worthiness or dignity? Or why did he insist that Nietzsche’s attempt to construct life-affirming values with the counter-assertion that “the very positing...of values in the world is already nihilism.”\textsuperscript{38} Values are what subjects add on to objects after subjects and objects have been abstracted from our mundane experience of things in the world. That is, prior to the positivistic division of subjects and objects, or values and facts, is our experience of useful and attractive things that are part of a familiar order or everyday world. Once the familiar qualities have been abstracted from things to make them scientific objects, these qualities reappear as subjective projections onto things. Value qualities are not understood as belonging to the thing, or the world in which the thing exists, but only as the product of subjective estimation or evaluation. “Value and the valuable become the positivistic substitute for the metaphysical.”\textsuperscript{39}

Heidegger thus did not think that values-discourse is antithetical to the positivist sciences, as we tend to do in juxtaposing values and facts, the subjective and immensurable versus the objective and measurable. But, for Heidegger, the discourses of the specialized sciences and of human values are forms of calculation or estimation about beings or things in the world and ignore meditative thinking on Being or world. “Yet the worth [Würde] of Being, as Being, does not consist in being a value [Wert], even the supreme value.”\textsuperscript{40} Being is worthy of contemplation, meditative questioning; it is not an object of our estimation, even of our highest esteem.

Values derive from the reduction of Being to objectified nature, or a world of scientific objects, and then the reconstitution of a meaningful world by human projection onto a world of objects. Values are subjective goals projected onto a world of objects. Values belong to our age of machine technology; they are calculable projections of desires as manageable goals. Rather than limiting or shaping our technical growth in the manner of fixed customs, a continuing tradition, or a stable if changing ethos, values are shaped by technological progress; they are more malleable than languages centred on virtue, natural law or even individual rights, and thus are more easily integrated into the structure and projects of a technological civilization. Like the

\textsuperscript{38} Heidegger, \textit{Nietzsche}, vol. 4, p. 44; also, p. 63, 133, 203-04, 219.
\textsuperscript{39} Heidegger, \textit{Question Concerning Technology}, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{40} Heidegger, \textit{Nietzsche}, vol. 4, p. 250.
headlights on subways or trains, they seem to lead our technological destiny, not follow the tracks laid out for them. Our values on matters of sexuality, life and death, ecology or whatever, appear as the cause but are the consequence of technologies of contraception, abortion, life-support systems, pollutants and emission controls.

Are Naturalistic Values a Contradiction in Terms?

Values are different from the good things in life; they are less what we live by than what we say we are to others. Values are idealizations of the good things in life. We don’t say that our values are wine, women and song even if we live as if they constituted a large part of the good things in life. In the dozens of studies of “Canadian values” or comparative studies of “human values” I have read, no responses of “medium rare lamb”, “unending sex,” or even “the scent of the sea and evergreens” have been recorded. Nietzsche’s values-discourse “de-natures” the good things in life, despite the fact that Nietzsche’s counsel to be faithful to the earth is often taken to be a recommendation to naturalize values. Christianity, Nietzsche taught, is responsible for “disvaluing nature and natural values.”\(^4^1\) Priestly sanctification of the supernatural devalues the natural; “everything valuable in itself, becomes utterly valueless, inimical to value through the parasitism of the priest.”\(^4^2\) We might note here that Nietzsche contradicted the central tenet of his values-discourse, namely, that nothing is valuable in itself.\(^4^3\) Nietzsche advocated a “naturalization of morality,” and “purely naturalistic values,”\(^4^4\) while maintaining that “there has never yet been a natural humanity.”\(^4^5\)

Numerous scholars have indicated that attempted to show that Nietzsche’s valorization of nature was not contradictory. Walter Kaufmann wrote that Nietzsche’s interpretation of Being as will to power was “an attempt to show how values can be generated out of nature.”\(^4^6\) Nietzsche often referred to a natural order of rank and “inequality of value between man and man.”\(^4^7\) Various Nietzsche scholars, such as Lawrence Lampert, Richard Schacht, and John Wilcox, thought Nietzsche’s natural order of rank serves to ground an “objective value standard” or “objective values” or a “standard of evaluation in consideration of the fundamental character of reality.”\(^4^8\) Other scholars, such as Karsten Harries and Hans Georg Gadamer with whom I agree, point out Nietzsche’s contradictory positions on nature as a standard by which to measure life. However, Harries and Gadamer do not relate this contradiction to the inadequacy of his values-

\(^4^1\) Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ*, p. 50.
\(^4^2\) Ibid, p. 138; also *Will to Power*, p. 141.
\(^4^3\) Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 149-50, 226; *Daybreak*, p. 133.
\(^4^5\) Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 73.
\(^4^7\) Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, pp. 516, 541; *The Anti-Christ*, 50.
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discourse. To attempt to render Nietzsche’s values-discourse consistent, we might suppose that Nietzsche’s natural order of rank was less a matter of fact (about which evidence and argument are relevant) than an assertion of will. “Order of rank: He who determines values and directs the will of millennia by giving direction to the highest natures is the highest man.” If Nietzsche’s proposition is ideological, not falsifiable by appeal to evidence or by inability to sustain dialogue, it is a proposition to be assessed in terms of its power or efficacy, not of truth or falsity.

To support this contention, one might point out Nietzsche’s view: “strange though it might sound, one has to defend the strong against the weak; the fortunate against the unfortunate; the healthy against those degenerating and afflicted with hereditary taints.” The powerful have to be defended against the weak who have become dominant, Nietzsche thought, by the prevalence of egalitarian doctrines; “In the age of suffrage universal, i.e., when everyone may sit in judgment on everyone and everything, I feel impelled to reestablish order of rank.” If Nietzsche thought the order of rank was natural or unalterable, rather than historical and changeable, he would not have felt the necessity of coming to the aid of the powerful to restore the order of rank. Natural or “objective values,” according to the central tenets of Nietzsche’s values-discourse, is a contradiction in terms; it is value without evaluation, the estimable without esteeming, willful assertions without volition. In short, one must abandon nature as a standard of evaluation or one must abandon evaluation if nature is a guide to good and evil.

Conclusion

I have attempted to rescue the language of intrinsic worthiness from the language of values, and the oxymoronic usage of “absolute values” and “objective values.” Richard Rorty claimed that a notion of intrinsic worthiness is metaphysical, while rightly stating that “objective values” and “absolute values” belong in the category with square circles. But, for Heidegger, what is intrinsically worthy is not beyond experience but is experienced in a mode of receptivity or openness to what is, as distinct from sizing up, appraising and evaluating what one experienced. To deny that anything is intrinsically worthy is to claim that nothing is invaluable or priceless, that everything is a matter of choice, taste, preference, perspectival appraisal or market evaluation, that nothing is a common good, a shared love or a common need.

If intrinsic worthiness does not pertain to a realm outside experience, to what could “intrinsic”, and its converse, “extrinsic,” refer? Perhaps “intrinsic” could refer to the standards appropriate to the matter in hand, whereas ‘extrinsic” might refer to foreign standards, imported from one realm (say, economics) to measure another (say, epistemology or ethics). If we were to hear of the value of Christianity, we would be alerted to some qualities (useful for citizenship or for family solidarity) other than its truth. If we hear of the value of a poem or an act of justice,

50 Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 513.
51 Ibid, p. 364.
52 Ibid, p. 457; also p. 459-61.
we would expect to hear of some characteristic other than the poem’s beauty—perhaps it promotes national pride-- or the act’s justice, which may be useful in showing how superior the way of life of the just agent is to others. Value suggests exchanging what is proper to the doctrine, poem or act for standards of judgment that may be appropriate for entirely different modes of experience.

The Nietzschean language of values is an attack on conceptions of a common good from Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Bodin, Rousseau and others. Nietzsche declaimed: “And how should there be a ‘common good’! The term contradicts itself: whatever can be common always has little value.”54 Nietzsche scholars elaborate this point in various ways. According to Alexander Nehemas, what is common is “cheap and detestable.”55 Robert Solomon indicates that “a value is the property of a person.” Philippa Foot agreed with Solomon in asserting that a value is “a personal rather than a universal principle.”56 Values-discourse suggests that there are no inter-subjective goods. If there are common goods, such as health, education, child care, and public broadcasting, they are to be paid for by the taxes of the healthy and sick, the educated and uneducated, those with and without children, those who love commercials and those who hate them; they are not individual values to be supplied and purchased at the marketplace. Thus, if Nietzsche and his followers are right to think common values is a contradiction in terms, the use of values militates against a polity based on principles of universal provision of needed services.

The language of values expresses well a pluralist marketplace of choices but fails to respond to the claims of need or love. For example, do the sentences “They need food” and “They value food” interchangeable? Or does the former indicate urgent need and the latter indicate preference for good food from a fairly elastic budget for consumer goods? Do the terminally ill “value” health, as do healthy fitness fanatics, or do they “long” for health? Do the homeless “value” housing as do they wealthy and house-proud? Values presuppose elasticity of demand; they are luxuries in the marketplace of choices. Values are not necessities.

If value-discourse does not do justice to the realm of necessity, it also does not express the gracious urgency of love. If we were to overhear the sentence, “I value you very highly,” we would be inclined to think, “Oh, oh, she is telling him to get lost: she does not need him or love him; she might rate his admirable qualities quite highly but she is not sufficiently attached to him

54 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 53.
that she is willing to overlook his irritatingly estimable qualities. She is moving on.” Does the sentence “I value my Canadian citizenship” mean “My identity is Canadian” or “I am pleased to be Canadian and would be reluctant to part with my citizenship except on favorable conditions”? Value judgments set the judge above the objects of his judgment or distance the estimator from the esteemed. Values are not loves or unshakeable loyalties but are the produce of subjective estimation, relative to other items to be estimated and exchanged. Values, for Nietzsche, are the product of will, not of need or of love.

Anti-metaphysical idealism inheres in Nietzsche’s evaluative philosophy as it is in the common use of values. If we were to hear the meaningless expression, "she has values", we would be alerted to nothing – or nothing more than that she is not a material girl, devoted to economic acquisition and creature comforts. Anti-naturalism informs values-discourse. If one were to conduct a survey on the good things in life, one might well receive responses of a medium-rare steak, a refreshing sleep, a baby's smile, an exciting sporting event, or lots of sex. But if one were to conduct a survey of Canadian values, few if any of this list of the components of the good life would appear as human or cultural values. Indeed, a response of roast lamb, sex and thinking to a survey of one's values would merit the judgment, "he has no values" or "he has not understood the question". An intrusive surveyor might keep on questioning until she received some proper answers, namely, toleration of “others,” the advancement of knowledge or democracy, world betterment or civic embellishment, politeness or self-actualization. There is a world of difference between what we consider the good things in life and what we maintain to be our values. Values are not what we live by but what we present to others. Heidegger described values as “grist for the mill of propaganda, art products as serviceable objects – at exhibitions of our achievements and as decorations for parade floats.”

Our values are advertising ourselves to others, self-images distorted through idealization. We are used by the language we use. The medium is the message. To use the language of values is to reject universal principles, common or shared goods, unshakeable loves or loyalties; it is a commitment to scepticism and relativism, coupled to the certainty that there is no point in discussing one’s values with others, in learning from dialogue and critical reflection. Professions of values are opinionated rather than opinions about the good life that are open to critical examination and philosophic conversation. Conflicting opinions about the use of stem cells in curing diseases are shut off once professions of values are invoked.

Nietzsche’s evaluative philosophy takes the active voice, with the stress on the subject, while Heidegger’s vocabulary of care for what is worthy adopts the passive voice, with the stress on what is needed or loved. An illustration of the latter is Heidegger’s famous statement in Der Speigel (30, 209) of May 1976 that “Only a god can save us.” Nietzschean values-discourse is projective, not receptive; it projects a libertarian sphere of preferences, desired options and negotiable assets, not a communitarian sphere of constitutive attachments, common needs and shared loves.

Heidegger’s wholesale rejection of the language of values may be as romantic as the desire to eliminate the economic marketplace from human life. Values-discourse is appropriate to the sphere of choice, taste and estimation but it perhaps should be bounded by a Kantian language

57 Heidegger, Nietzsche, vol. 3, p. 182
of universal principle, of human dignity, or a Heideggerian language of care for the invaluable worthiness of that which is beyond market calculation. It is not for me to settle the fluctuating shoreline of the language of values, or the changing coastline of the language of worthiness, but is a matter of public debate insofar as dogmatic assertions of values do not preclude the debate from the outset. There is no metaphysical reason why Canadians should think their public broadcasting and health system is worthier than commercial systems but there may be political and economic reasons. To frame the debate in the language of values is to incline the provision of health, child care, knowledge, broadcasting towards market evaluation. A healthy pluralism and a mixed economy require both a language of will, choice and values and a language of care, love, and worthiness.