**Rights, Values, (the) Meaning in/of Life and Socrates’s ‘How Should One Live?’: A Rationally-Unquestionable Interpretation.**

**Abstract**

This paper expands on another which focussed on Socrates’s question: ‘How should one live?’. The present paper also focusses on the ‘meaning of life’ and ‘meaning in life’ issues, and more on rights.

To fully rationally answer Socrates’s question, we need to answer the epistemic question: ‘How can one know how one should live?’. This paper attempts to answer both. And knowing how one should live fundamentally involves knowing what values one should live by. This includes which rights one should have and which rights others should have. So one’s values include how one should treat all persons (and (other) animals, the environment and so on.) All this relates to what one finds meaningful in life and the meaning or point of one’s life.

In sum, all the notions in this paper’s title are interrelated.

The issue of rationality is crucial here. Just one example here (qualified later) is that our rationality gives us cognitively meaningful notions. ‘Rationality’ here only concerns knowledge, e.g., ways to acquire scientific knowledge, and meta-knowledge concerning values. No values or rights as such are rational or knowledge. However:-

Many factors are required for human rationality to exist and develop, e.g., life, mental health and evidence-based education. Human rationality’s need for those factors, hence their value to rationality, is rationally-unquestionable – and that applies to the practised values prescribing the prescribable factors. With this, there are rationally-unquestionable rights to those factors.

Those prescribable factors require certain interrelated epistemic, moral, social, political, legal, educational and other values/rights to be practised. This implies a pro-rationality values-theory with one obligatory, general end – a uniquely rationally-unquestionable end. This end provides the basis for answering Socrates’s question as rationally (correctly) as is possible for values/rights.

That end is fundamentally epistemic, namely ‘Be pro-rationality’, yet the theory has deeply-humanly-meaningful, universal applications. It has implications for current and all possible moral, social, political, legal, educational, environmental etc issues. E.g., the theory shows that human rationality crucially requires love and certain other emotions, health-care, education and upbringing. These require certain right to be respected and practised. With this, the paper discusses affection, free speech, journalism, psychotherapy, political and sexual consent, responsibilities, freedom and government.

The theory’s general sub-values prescribe much prescribed by some other theories, e.g., broad and deep knowledge-acquisition (in certain areas), rationally-critical thinking, non-sexism, non-racism, general types of liberalism, holistic flourishing, happiness, unselfishness and fairness. However, all other values-theories lack pro-rationality theory’s maximum possible rational-unquestionability, internal coherence and coherence with rationality.

The theory encourages (the right to) total freedom in a-rationality areas, areas irrelevant to its obligatory end.

The theory inherently requires its advocates to be (self‑)critical, rationally viewing the theory’s necessarily human-suggested specifics as often fallible or unavoidably approximate. So the theory is a work-in-progress.

**Keywords**: values, ethics, rights, responsibilities (duties), meaningfulness, epistemic-values, virtues, moral, social, political, legal, education, epistemology, knowledge, rationality, justification, meta-ethics, bio-ethics, psychotherapy, journalism, Kant, Socrates, peace.

**Section 1: Introduction**

This paper expands on and points out various representative implications of another open access (free) paper by the same author, available via (1) philpapers.org (or its philarchive.org) and via (2) Academia.edu. The titles of the paper differ slightly between (1) and (2), but both titles contain “Rationally-Unquestionable Interrelated …Values”.

All those papers were written to be at least basically understandable by students beginning university or similar education. There is plenty of at least implicit depth for advanced students or professional philosophers.

This paper concerns the two most important general issues for humanity. The first is ‘What should one do?’. This will be called Question A. It requires answering the other, epistemic issue, Question B: ‘How can one know what one should do?’ Question A can be restated as Socrates’s ‘How should one live?’, and Question B as ‘How can one know how one should live?’. If we cannot answer Questions A and B rationally-unquestionably, there is no rational point in doing anything, including living. And, as argued soon, if something is not rational or rationally-unquestionable, it cannot be right or correct in any coherent sense of ‘right’ or ‘correct’. (A simplified example of rationality’s correctness concerns ‘1+2=3’:- There is no incoherence here, because ‘1+2=3’ is equivalent to 1+1+1=1+1+1. This is clearly correct. An irrational case here is ‘1+2=5’. It is clearly incorrect that 1+1+1=1+1+1+1+1. This is incoherent. To think that ‘1+2=5’ is correct is obviously incoherent thinking. More on such issues later.)

The issue of whether there is any rational(ly unquestionable) point in doing anything, including living, relates to the issue of (the) meaning in/of life. If there is no rationally-unquestionable point, then from a rational (correct) view life is meaningless. With this, the general answer to Question A can be restated as: ‘To do what is rationally-unquestionably as right as possible, one should do what is rationally-unquestionable as meaningful as possible.’ One should do that for which there is a rationally-unquestionable answer to: ‘What is the point in doing that?’ The answer to the latter question needs to be: ‘Because it is rationally-unquestionably right (or at least permitted).’

Regarding all those issues:- Socrates said an unexamined life is not worth living. An examination here, and the related notion ‘worth’, need to fundamentally involve (critical) rationality. Otherwise, as suggested in detail soon, the examination and what is considered worthwhile (or meaningful) cannot be rationally-unquestionable, coherent or correct.

Question A covers everything one intentionally does over all of one’s life, including all intended thought. So it covers all choices. We at least implicitly intentionally choose to do something at least every few seconds when conscious, including, e.g., continuing to walk, sit, think, look, stand or lay down – rather than not walk, not sit etc. Because choices involve values, Question A concerns all values-areas, e.g., moral, social, legal, political, educational, environmental, health-care, aesthetic values – plus scientific-research values, everyday ordinary knowledge-seeking values and other directly-epistemic values. Question B concerns knowing and hence epistemic issues and values, e.g., the nature of the evidence needed for knowledge, and valuing that evidence. As rationally-unquestionably answering A means we must first answer B, epistemic issues are fundamental. Hence so is practising the epistemic values needed to answer B, then A.

As explained further soon, the rationally-unquestionable answer to Question A can be outlined as: ‘One should do what one knows is as rationally-justifiable as possible’. This interrelates rationally-unquestionable answers to Questions A and B. These answers will be shown to imply that in rationally-unquestionably dealing with any moral, social etc value-issue, e.g., sexism or racism, epistemic-values are involved. (These involve rights and responsibilities or duties.)

A preliminary example:-

When knowing that ‘1+2=3’ is rational, we at least implicitly know that 1+2=3 remains rational if stated by someone with a different sex or race: here we are rationally-necessarily non-sexist and non-racist. It is rationally-unquestionable that 1+2=3 remains rational regardless of the stater’s sex and race. So human epistemic values necessarily include non-sexism and non-racism.

Non-sexism, non-racism and so on are ‘indirectly-epistemic’ values. ‘Directly-epistemic’ values necessarily include valuing evidence, and can include, e.g., valuing the honesty, integrity, responsibility and strength of character needed to determinedly seek and courageously publicise evidence disproving certain un-evidenced religious and political claims – in situations involving great social and political pressure to believe those claims. Those directly-epistemic values overlap here with or involve moral, social and political values, e.g., (rationality-required) honesty and strength of character. (Many more rationally-unquestionable or rationality-required values are discussed soon.)

The previous two paragraphs give a preliminary indication of how to deal with interrelated Questions A and B – ‘One should do what one knows is as rationally-justifiable as possible’. Normal persons at least implicitly do know that rational statements remain rational regardless of the stater’s sex and race. Though not rational as such, values such as non-sexism and non-racism are rationally-unquestionable. It is important to note that, via this paper’s soon-expanded definition of ‘rational’, the values defended in this paper are *not* rational (or knowledge) as such; rather, they are rationally-*unquestionable* or rationality-*required*. This makes them as rationally-justifiable as is *possible* for values.

In sum:- To be rational, we need to practise rationally-unquestionable, rationality-required values – both directly-epistemic values and indirectly-epistemic or moral etc values. These values are hence as rationally-justifiable as possible.

With this, it will be shown that to think rationally-unquestionably meaningfully means to have a rational point to one’s thoughts. One’s intended thoughts direct all what one intentionally does, via one’s values. So a rationally-unquestionable point to what one does involves one being rational and having rationally-unquestionable values. This relates to Socrates’s ‘How should one live?’, involving ‘What should one do?’, which involves meaningfulness and one’s rights and responsibilities.

Any rationally-unquestionable answer to what are often viewed as non-epistemic value issues, e.g., moral, social, political and legal issues, must involve the epistemic values which need to be practised in order for us to know what is rationally-unquestionable in those moral etc areas. Therefore there is no clear separation between epistemic and (allegedly or apparently) non-epistemic, moral etc values. Moral etc values are not directly involved in acquiring knowledge, but practising certain moral etc values is required if we are to acquire knowledge – and knowledge and hence obviously-epistemic, directly-epistemic practised values are needed so we can know which moral etc values are rationally-unquestionable.

If one is to reliably practise directly-epistemic values, e.g., valuing the careful seeking of evidence, then oneself and various persons must have practised the moral, social etc values needed for oneself to be able to practise the directly-epistemic values. Non-sexist and non-racist values have been mentioned. Also, e.g., one’s parents/carers must have valued and hence cared for oneself when a child so one could stay alive to become a rational adult able to practise those directly-epistemic values. That care involves practising the required moral, social and other values involving valuing, e.g., the rights, education, need for affection, health and safety of the child. Here those moral etc values or practices are indirectly-epistemic values or practices, i.e., presuppositions for having and practising directly-epistemic values. So any division into epistemic values and non-epistemic values is rationally-questionable. Regarding rationality-required values, it is somewhat like two sides of the same coin; you cannot have one without the other. (This relates to Questions A and B being inextricably interrelated.)

Concluding/summarising recent points:- Regarding rationally-unquestionable values, there are no totally non-epistemic values. So the interrelated value-types discussed in this paper will be classified as either ‘directly-epistemic’ or ‘indirectly-epistemic’, with the latter also sometimes called ‘moral, social, political, legal, educational and so on’ or similar, or, for short, ‘moral etc’. The most important issues here being that interrelation and the soon-explained overall general, one, fundamental rationally-unquestionable value covering all other rationally-unquestionable values, regardless of how they are classified. This relates to the answers to Questions A and B needing to be interrelated. This also relates to the rationally-unquestionable (the) meaning in/of life, and those values involve rights (and related responsibilities).

To rationally-unquestionably deal with A, B and hence meaning and rights etc will be shown to involve a single general value with sub-values covering those two interrelated value-types, all areas, and all intended practices or choices. Logically and hence rationally-justifiably, there can only be one right general, fundamental value. If there is one right general, fundamental epistemic value and one right non-epistemic value, these could conflict, requiring a more fundamental value to resolve the conflict, hence proving one or both those values to be not right. This is incoherent, and not only because there can be no fundamental value more fundamental than a fundamental value. Relatedly, because Questions A and B are inextricably interrelated, this rationally-unquestionable interrelation must involve a single, common, general, fundamental value. Plural fundamental right values would contradict each other, and rationally-questionable or irrational ones would contradict rationality and the rationally-unquestionable – and hence question the rationally-unquestionable. The right cannot contradict the right or the rationally-unquestionable. That would be incoherent, irrational. Life would be meaningless from a rational viewpoint, There would be no rationally-unquestionable point in doing anything.

(In that paragraph, terms such as ‘fundamental value’ can be replaced by a term such as ‘highest-priority value/end’, with the same conclusions reached regarding incoherence etc.)

If something is not rational, rationally-justified or rationally-unquestionable, it cannot be right or correct, as with the pure mathematical 1+2=3 being correct via being the rational ‘1+1+1 is 1+1+1’, and not ‘1+1’ or anything else, meaning 1+2=2 and so on are irrational. This paper aims to show there is a general value which is uniquely as close to being rationally-justified as is possible for a value, i.e., uniquely as correct as possible for a value. To do this, more needs to be said regarding what this paper means by ‘rational’, ‘rationally-justified’ and related terms – in relation to values, meaningfulness etc and their rational-unquestionability. Some preliminary comments:-

(Some comments here are qualified later.)

Rationality is fundamental regarding the epistemic, i.e., regarding knowledge. Rationality is the method via which we acquire knowledge. Even when knowledge is discovered by chance, it is only rationality, which includes other knowledge, which can recognise it is new knowledge. This happened with Fleming’s discovery of penicillin’s anti-bacterial effect. (Others lacking Fleming’s rationality/knowledge, say the laboratory cleaners who saw the same Petri dish, would not recognise (know) what Fleming recognised (knew).) The sight would have little or no meaning for the cleaners.

Basically the paper concerns this: What could ‘justify a value’ coherently, intelligibly mean except to show that rationality conceivably regards it as uniquely unquestionable, and hence as rationally-justified as possible for a value? As shown soon, the general value here is pro-rationality, the only one coherent with rationality. (Alternative values and associated theories are shown to be somewhat incoherent and somewhat irrational. From any viewpoint, V, the pro-V is deemed unquestionably justified/correct and meaningful. However, V may not be rational(ity) or rationally-unquestionably meaningful.)

It is important to note that, perhaps paradoxically, not all epistemic values are overall pro-rationality. E.g., to value devoting one’s life to simply acquiring *any* knowledge could mean devotedly counting all Earth’s pebbles: practising such values (and finding them meaningful) means not acquiring knowledge needed to help society be as pro-rationality as possible, e.g., not acquiring knowledge concerning avoiding brain cancer, and not feeding and not educating one’s children. More later on the general issues here. They can be temporarily ignored.

Rationality-required values are directly- or indirectly-epistemic values, or both. The ‘both’ was exemplified by the recent discussion of non-sexism and non-racism being rationally-unquestionably a socially-necessary value via being an epistemically-necessary or rationally-necessary value for humans being rational concerning 1+2=3 (or anything rational). The rationality-required or rationally-necessary is rationally-unquestionable.

Such rationally-unquestionable values imply a values-theory. Underlying any value is a theory. A values-theory concerns practice, so the theory needs to be rationally-unquestionable plus practicable for humans. The theory discussed below is highly practicable, including via being motivating due to concerning all important human issues – e.g., ‘How should one live?’ and ‘What is the point of living?’. With this, it often requires certain types of passionate engagement, courage, dedication, happiness, caring, fairness, liberality, creativity, intellectual and other flourishing and other positively motivating, emotion-involving factors. All those factors will be shown to be directly- and/or indirectly-epistemic factors, i.e., rationality-required factors. Education is clearly a very important factor regarding the epistemic or rationality/knowledge. Education, intentional or unintentional, by oneself or others, is what directly produces all rationality/knowledge, except any innate rationality (discussed shortly). So education is often crucially involved in issues discussed above and below, at least implicitly.

Expanding on those preliminary comments:-

In this paper the term ‘rationality’ only concerns knowledge, e.g., the methods needed to reliably acquire knowledge, and hence the sufficiently-evidenced, hence rational-justification of knowledge. Notions such as ‘it is rational to be self-interested’, or ’maximise profit’, or ‘avoid painful death’, are excluded. Thence, e.g., the theory excludes ‘It is rational for persons to have the epistemic aim of primarily acquiring knowledge which is in their/society’s economic self-interest’. Knowledge is often acquired as the reliable epistemic means to help achieve a valued end, e.g., survival, wealth, health, happiness or power. No such or any end (or value) is rational – because only the directly-epistemic means to reliably achieve an end is rational (and hence involves knowledge). (However, soon it is argued that one end can be known to be uniquely rationally-unquestionable, though not in itself rational or knowledge. This end is primarily epistemic, directly or indirectly. This end is ‘Be pro-rationality’, and hence ‘Be pro-knowledge’. It is the short answer to Question A: ‘How should one live?’ or ‘What should one do?’. Thence it concerns the rationally-unquestionable meaning in/of life.)

This paper’s values-theory views rationality, knowledge and related epistemic, moral, social, political, legal, health-care, environmental, educational etc factors and values as central. As just suggested, the theory basically agrees with Hume (with qualifications mentioned below) that rationality is purely instrumental.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is the tool which seeks, acquires and involves what is for us knowledge. With this, knowledge is also viewed in this paper as purely instrumental, not as an end. (Soon a type of knowledge is shown to be a means to understand and help achieve the rationally-unquestionable end, ‘Be pro-rationality’, and relatedly be a means to answer Question B.)

In this paper, ‘knowledge’ only refers to the following areas and areas consistent with them: (knowing how to do) sound reasoning, correct mathematics, empirical observation and objective science[[2]](#footnote-2) – plus, as explained next, meta-knowledge concerning values or ends, and concerning knowledge/rationality.

Where possible, the theory requires persons to know meta-knowledge such as outlined in (a)-(g) below. This is important regarding the theory’s view of knowledge/rationality, regarding values, regarding Questions A and B, regarding rational and pro-rationality meaningfulness and regarding the theory’s inherent self-critical aspects:-

(a) Evidence is rational (factual). (Alternative definitions of ‘evidence’ are incoherent, as suggested later. Briefly, e.g., ‘faith as evidence’, ‘my feelings as evidence’ and ‘my values as evidence’ allow contradictory faiths, feelings and values to be considered right or factual.)

Rationality involves using all the available evidence, which needs to be sufficient for an overall view sufficient to mean knowledge. The overall, rational view inherently involves coherence among all evidence. As shown often below, such coherence is rationality-required, and hence conceivably valued by rationality, meaning such coherence is of pro-rationality, epistemic value. The rationally-unquestionably meaningful is coherent, which relates to issues concerning (the) meaning in/of life.

(b) An *overall*, coherent view is important, as in the overall, sufficiently-evidenced view of the solar system disproving the insufficient, non-overall, Earth-based, Earth-centred view – a view incoherent with the overall view’s evidence/facts. (An overall view involving interrelated evidence and coherence will be shown to be crucial regarding rationally-justifying moral etc values as far as possible, and hence regarding Questions A and B.)

(c) Knowledge is often only probable, approximate or asymptotic, and sometimes situationally-variable. Evidence can be insufficient. There may be only apparently evidence or apparently sufficient evidence, as with the once common European non-overall view, hence incoherent view, that all swans are white. Skepticism concerning our often-fallible attempts to be rational or knowledgeable can be rational.

(d) Meta-knowledge concerning knowledge also includes knowing about other general problems with rationality/knowledge. These include the induction problem, the criterion problem, Gettier problems, the unavoidable circularity due to our rationality/knowledge being unavoidably entirely within (somewhat-socialised) individual minds, and controversies concerning Kant’s related distinction between things-in-themselves outside our minds and the human rational-mind-interpretation of them which is for us all knowledge can be.

(e) Values-theories ultimately concern practices. Regarding our *practices*, regardless of problems as in (d), we necessarily assume rationality and knowledge exist. E.g., it is for you rationally-undeniable or knowledge that (in-practice) you are now reading this. Even persons denying or doubting that rationality/knowledge exist assume in practice that it is rational/knowledge that, e.g., to stay alive, they must, e.g., eat, drink and breathe only certain substances and avoid being hit by fast trucks. In practice they tend, e.g., to unhesitatingly get out of the way of fast approaching trucks, acting as if they rationally-unquestionably know there is real danger. In practice they find such (assumed) knowledge meaningful. If they practise their theoretical denial or doubts, viewing their perception of a fast truck or other danger as meaningless, and hesitate, they will soon die. And in-practice they treat, e.g., what rational persons know are toilets, as toilets, not, e.g., as shoes, cars, food or as not real, meaningless and not usable. In their practices, alive rationality-deniers/doubters and all alive persons have used survival-necessary and much other rationality/knowledge. (The actually meaningful or actually practised involves rationality.) Death by suicide also requires rationality/knowledge – regarding how (in-practice) to die.

(e)(i) In practice we naturally intend to be and are rational thousands of times hourly so that, instead of irrationality, i.e., mistakes, we can reliably successfully, e.g., acquire knowledge, move, think, reason, speak, read, listen, avoid danger, find food and drink, find itches, clothes, toilets, doors, friends, pockets, buildings – and so on. And we need rationality to know a mistake is a mistake.

Most importantly, we need rationality to think meaningfully. This is one way, the cognitive way, in which rationality gives us meaning in life. (Rationally-unquestionable values are the right way to give us moral etc meaning in life. This way is coherent with the other.) With a total lack of rationality, for us nothing would be what it is. We would be like a rock, without meaningful thought, perception and so on. No word or idea or object would be what it is. E.g., we would not know that ‘Yes’ means ‘Yes’, or means anything, or that food is food. This would be like a Chinese speaker and an English speaker not understanding a word the other says.

The basis of human rationality and hence of meaning seems innate. E.g., consider the well-known experiment where newborns looking at one simple object passing repeatedly back and forth show the inborn ‘surprise’ response facially and in brain scans – if suddenly two of the objects appear.[[3]](#footnote-3) Innately, normal newborns know a thing is (i) what it is and relatedly (ii) not not what it is. These are fundamental laws of rational thought and related coherent perception.[[4]](#footnote-4) A brain lacking that basis would lack the ability to find meaning – in anything. Again, with a total lack of rationality, for us nothing would be what it is. All in one’s life would be meaningless.

To actually be able to deny or doubt that one must think via such presupposed laws, i.e., via thinking *without* them, would mean one’s denial or doubt is not a denial or doubt, or that one could not know it is, or what it is. And to succeed with practising a claim that one could start thinking from an alternative basis would have to mean one could not know what that basis and claim are, or what any basis or claim is. Again, there is incoherence, meaninglessness and impossibility. Similarly, to check whether or prove that one must start from such fundamental laws as (i) and (ii) above, one must *presuppose* them in order to know what ‘check’ or ‘prove’ mean. Every letter, syllable, word, symbol, phrase etc in that check or proof would have to be what it is, and mean what it means, not something else. And so on.

In sum, without starting from a fundamental rational basis we could not perceive, experience or be conscious of anything (as what it is).[[5]](#footnote-5) There would be no consciousness, or no meaningful consciousness. (Kant suggests some such thing.) To think, we must think *of* something, and that something must be what it is or we could not think of it. We could not think.

In sum, at least implicitly, via building on and hence learning partly via some such inborn basis, we conscious, practising humans necessarily naturally use and hence value rationality virtually permanently, and view doing so as rationally-unquestionable. (Later it is argued this is one of various notions useful regarding rationally-justifying a values-theory as far as possible, and regarding (the) meaning in/of life.)

(f) So, regarding all reliable, meaningful achievements (practices), rationality is achievement-necessary, a practical-necessity. If irrationality (a mistake) or chance somehow showed us something correct or useful in-practice, it is only our rationality which could know of the correctness or usefulness.

(g) The most important practical meta-knowledge, discussed next, shows that rationality requires various directly-epistemic plus moral, social, political, legal, educational, economic, health-care etc factors and related practised values – and shows that their hence rational-unquestionability implies a universally-applicable values-theory, one inherently involving epistemic values. This theory relates to ‘What is the general rationally-unquestionable point or meaning of one’s life?’ and hence ‘How should one live?’.

Rationality’s product, (meta‑)knowledge, can be about those directly-epistemic and moral and all other values, and hence every choice we make. Negative knowledge here, explained soon, shows that nearly all values are rationally-questionable. Positive knowledge here concerns the exception(s), namely one general, rationality-required value and hence the values thereunder – and the rationality-required factors they prescribe.

The rationality-required is pro-rationality. The rest of this paper mostly expands on the next paragraph. It outlines the basic answers to Questions A and B, and hence to issues concerning rights, responsibilities, values and (the) meaning in/of life.:-

If a factor is necessary for and hence required by rationality, and hence crucially valuable regarding rationality’s very existence, then rationality cannot self-coherently question whether the factor is required or valuable here. Rationality is inherently coherent (or the knowledge it produces is at least consistent[[6]](#footnote-6)). So the factor and its being valuable here, plus the associated values-theory prescribing the factor, are rationally-unquestionable. Only the anti-rationality or irrational can question the factor, its being valuable here and the associated values-theory – and can only do so incorrectly. (Anti-rationality is exemplified shortly.)

First here:-

Some pro-rationality, rationality-required factors just exist, hence being unprescribable, e.g., astronomical, chemical and evolutionary factors which help(ed) make humanity and its rationality possible. Many factors can be prescribed. Specific prescriptions here come under the general value, ‘Be pro-rationality’, e.g., indirectly-epistemic sub-values such as ‘Supply children’s material needs, e.g., food, or they will not live long enough to become increasingly rational’. (Non-supplying here is anti-rationality.) Those sub-values often have further, more specific values under them, e.g., prescribing which balances among which specific foods and other factors in situation S are optimal for maximising a specific child’s life-long rationality. (Clearly, (inherently rational) evidence is needed for such specifics/balances, which can only be approximate.)

Rationality-required factors often involve degrees and balances. An overall view needs to assess them. E.g., a diet optimal for developing a specific child’s rationality may be only a slight degree better here than certain other diets – diets requiring far less resources, saving resources overall more productive regarding society’s rationality increasing/developing.

Some factors are required for rationality to simply exist in a basic form, others for existing basic rationality to increase or develop, i.e., beyond basic rationality as in infants counting up to 3, into, e.g., sophisticated adult mathematics.

Some factors and associated values are instrumental. Others are internal to or fundamental aspects of our rationality.

Instrumental factors:-

Numerous factors are instrumentally necessary if one’s rationality/knowledge is to exist and develop, e.g., whatever keeps one alive, e.g., food, care and safety. And newborns need the necessary epistemic potential. Later there needs to be no rationality-disabling injury, disease, stress, depression or anxiety. Similarly, e.g., in late 20th Century Romanian orphanages, infants never given even minor mental stimulation suffered long-term reduced epistemic, cognitive ability and hence reduced ability to be rational.[[7]](#footnote-7) A lack of physical affection, a lack of feeling obviously loved by dependable carers, had a similar effect. These infants got their material needs, e.g., food and drink, but were typically left alone in cots. Some such infants died due to that emotional neglect. They lost a basic rationality-required factor: life. (Such neglect is anti-rationality.) In an important sense it is as if they were affected by feeling there was no point in continuing to live. The insufficient affection meant insufficient meaning in/of their infant lives. So pro-rationality cognitive, epistemic factors include infant mental stimulation, love and physical affection, e.g., frequent cuddling involving feeling loved. These factors involve psychological effects with physiological (even fatal) effects. Harry Harlow’s (1959) work with infant primates further shows cuddling or perceived affection is important for primate physical, cognitive and other mental development.[[8]](#footnote-8) The emotions here, and others, will be further shown to be crucial rationality-required, pro-rationality factors. This means that pro-rationality indirectly-epistemic values include prescribing such factors. E.g., due to the normal human brain’s interacting emotional, cognitive and other parts, ‘Give infants direct affection’ is an epistemic value/prescription for humans. Humans thus have a pro-rationality right to such affection, and hence a responsibility to be affectionate. Affection is one (potentially[[9]](#footnote-9)) pro-rationality factor giving normal humans much meaningfulness in life.

Some conclusions so far:-

Pro-rationality, epistemic factors which educators, parents etc can affect require practised pro-rationality values prescribing the factors. Practised values here become pro-rationality factors. Pro-rationality instrumental values involve an at least implicit ‘To help cause or maintain/increase rationality/knowledge’ or similar prefix or suffix. The values include ‘Stimulate children cognitively’, ‘Do not let children suffer or die due to emotional neglect’ and ‘Supply children’s material needs, e.g., food’. (Via evolution, children and caring for them are normally felt to be naturally intrinsically valuable. This helps give meaning to the parents’ and children’s lives. Feeling thus is (potentially[[10]](#footnote-10)) extremely extrinsically (instrumentally) valuable regarding motivating pro-rationality parents, educators etc to practise pro-rationality values here. The general points here also apply elsewhere than to parents and children, as suggested below.)

There are many pro-rationality factors instrumentally fundamental for, or presuppositions for, human rationality existing. So they and the associated values are from rationality’s conceivable viewpoint at least indirectly as-far-as-possible rationally-justified. To in-practice question them via not practising them, e.g., via never feeding any children, would mean the end of human rationality. So it is rationally-unquestionable that they are of value to rationality. Similarly, pro-rationality factors/values are unquestionable by rational educators and parents etc wishing to help children’s rationality exist. Related comments apply regarding rationality increasing/developing, i.e., beyond rationality simply existing. These factors/values give rationally-unquestionable meaning to and in our lives.

Instrumental factors and practised values, e.g., food and ‘The children are being fed’, are external to rationality-as-such. Next, values (and associated factors) internal to human rationality – values practised simultaneously with, and which are inherent aspects of, our being rational. (Various recent comments apply here.)

These internal-to-rationality practised directly-epistemic and moral, social etc values are uniquely directly, non-instrumentally rationally-justified as far as possible for values. An introductory example follows. (Simplified points are expanded on later.):-

Suppose a sexist, racist and religious person, Chris, holds a certain view concerning evolution dearly, identifying strongly with it. A non-religious person, Sam, with a sex and race different to Chris’s, presents Chris with rational, scientific facts, i.e., evidence, disproving Chris’s view. Chris is rationality-required (epistemically-required) to value being rationally critical, including self-critical, namely value being skeptical and fallibilist where this helps achieve knowledge. To be rational, to be correct, Chris also needs to be pro-rationality via practising non-sexist, non-racist and non-egoistic values. Because evidence is rational, Chris needs to value the freedom of all to present evidence and to have evidence considered purely on its merits, and not rejected for subjective, non-evidence-based or irrational reasons, e.g., egoism, faith or the presenter’s sex/race.­ So, practised values promoting freedom to present evidence, and promoting freedom from sexism etc, are pro-rationality, epistemic factors.

Even if Sam or anyone did not present such evidence to Chris at the time (due to Chris being alone then,) Chris is still rationality-required to have socially-relevant, non-egoistic, non-sexist etc epistemic moral etc values This is not only because Sam or others may sometime present Chris with such evidence. Also, e.g., solitary Chris may be irrational because of Chris’s egoistic, arrogantly sexist, religious etc values. So those non-egoistic, non-sexist etc values are always at least implicitly necessary for human rationality. E.g., again, when knowing that 1+2=3 is rational, we at least implicitly know that 1+2=3 remains rational if stated by someone with a different sex/race: here we are rationally-necessarily non-sexist and non-racist. Otherwise our mathematics is irrational, incoherent, meaningless. To be consistent here, in life generally, our lives would be cognitively meaningless.

As far as is possible for values, those non-sexist etc values are directly rationally-justified via being *internal* to or *necessary* *functional aspects* *of* rational science, and of our rationality generally – including regarding us as both social and rational, cognitive beings. We practise them whenever we are rational. When we correctly evaluate a scientific (or mathematical etc) notion as rationally-justified (epistemically-justified), we at least implicitly correctly evaluate the required pro-rationality, epistemic values necessarily involved as rationally-justified (as far as possible …). Some internal-to-rationality directly-epistemic values are obviously presuppositional regarding epistemic achievements or knowledge. E.g., one must first value evidence before one can intentionally acquire knowledge. Other values apply while we are being rational. Either way, being internal to or inherent in or necessary for our rationality, they are in a sense intrinsic values for/within rationality, and in that sense intrinsically justified for rationality (as far as is possible for values). No other epistemic, moral, social etc values can rationally (correctly) be described and justified in such ways (or to that degree).

That paragraph obviously shows that the directly-epistemic values involved are inextricably associated with those moral and social (e.g., non-sexist) etc indirectly-epistemic values. They are mutually coherent – a rational and pro-rationality requirement. Only that mutual coherence gives rationally-unquestionable meaning to and in our lives.

(With this, the scientific etc knowledge produced by rationality involves truth – and truth is often viewed by normal humans as intrinsically valuable. This helps give that rationally-unquestionable meaning (valuableness) to and in a pro-rationality life.[[11]](#footnote-11))

Pro-rationality instrumental and internal-to-rationality values/factors often involve emotions. E.g., to overrule emotions involved with egoism, faith and disliking a certain sex or race involves (soon-discussed) powerful pro-rationality emotion associated with the pro-rationality knowledge that egoism, faith etc are rationally-unjustified. And feeling that children are intrinsically valuable and lovable is another powerful pro-rationality, indirectly-epistemic emotional factor when it motivates pro-rationality child-care. ( Again, that feeling could also motivate, e.g., Nazis to care for Nazi children. This is not pro-rationality child-care, as suggested further soon. So many factors are only *potentially* pro-rationality. They only become pro-rationality if the overall situation is pro-rationality. Only here is there coherence among factors and how they are used.)

Those internal-to-rationality epistemic values are, in Kant’s general terminology but with different specifics, a type of strict or ‘perfect’ (exceptionless) duties: they must be practised exceptionlessly if we are to be rational. If we are to be rationally-unquestionably correct we have a fundamental responsibility and right to practise them. The instrumental values are analogous to Kant’s non-strict or ‘imperfect’ duties: they need to be practised, but there is some room for latitude, exceptions or choice here. E.g., if children’s need for direct affection and cognitive stimulation are optimally met by certain adults, other adults can instead be indirectly-epistemically dutiful in other ways, e.g., via ensuring there is ample healthy food for children. And it is acceptable for those affectionate parents or child-carers to occasionally limit their affection or cognitive stimulating, e.g., if exhausted or very ill. There is no such latitude, choice or variation permitted with the internal-to-rationality epistemic values, e.g., respecting relevant evidence and being non-racist. These values are at least implicitly self-evidently necessary. E.g., it is self-evident that 1+2=3 is rational regardless of which type of person knowingly states it; there are no exceptions. (Skepticism here is irrational.) Even if one at some time knows of no-one else stating 1+2=3, one is at least potentially practising the internal-to-rationality values, e.g., non-sexism, because there is a potential for someone of a different sex to state it sometime in one’s presence, or somewhere sometime. (All normal non-infants could state 1+2=3.) In necessarily knowing and at least potentially practising those values, they are a type of a priori or synthetic a priori value: prior to being rational. E.g., prior to thinking 1+2=3, one at least implicitly knows those values necessarily apply regarding being rational.

So those internal-to-rationality epistemic values are a type of ‘is’, not just an ‘ought’. They unavoidably apply when we are rational; there is no choice. And, as shown above, though we can often choose to be rational, we are extremely often, without choosing, naturally necessarily rational. This too is an ‘is’, an ‘is’ involving those here-necessary ‘is’ values. The necessary is not an ‘ought’, hence not a choice. There are moral, social etc choices or ‘oughts’ beyond and coherent with that (their) necessary epistemic-value-foundation, e.g., regarding being non-racist in one’s life generally, say regarding who one would befriend or employ. However, though here one is not directly, explicitly being rational, e.g., via explaining that 1+2 is 3, one is indirectly being rational automatically (unchosenly) in that, e.g., rationality is needed for one to know what ‘friend’ and ‘employ’ mean, and to know how to befriend and employ. This gives us cognitively rational meaning in life. Rationality is always at least implicitly involved in whatever we meaningfully think and do or achieve – and rationality requires certain practised values. Also, if we are not pro-rationality and hence non-racist etc beyond that necessary epistemic-value-foundation, our values are incoherent overall. This has been shown above to mean one is wrong here, and this will be further shown below.

Next, introductory comments concerning Sections 2-3’s further justificatory, complementary arguments, initially concerning coherence. (A-rationality, discussed later and elsewhere,[[12]](#footnote-12) is ignored here.):-

Pro-rationality factors/values cohere uniquely maximally with rationality: they have a supportive, causal or positive and sometimes intrinsic relation to/within rationality, i.e., a

‘pro-’ relation. All pro-rationality factors and values inherently cohere with each other. Any factor/value not cohering thus would be anti-rationality, i.e., incoherent with rationality via conflicting with rationality existing or developing – as with the irrationality inherent in sexism, and as with neglecting children’s need for love. It will soon increasingly be further shown (see (a)-(b) above) that coherence is crucial for rational justification, and hence for meaning. It will be shown that every values-theory except one is at least somewhat internally incoherent and incoherent with rationality: any incoherence means mistakes, i.e., irrationality, i.e., being rationally-unjustified.

That sentence concerning incoherence is fundamental regarding the answers to Questions A and B. Persons need to know that being incoherent is being wrong, as with believing the inconsistent 1+2=4, or that 1+1+1 or 3 is not 1+1+1 or 3, i.e., both 3 and not-3. This, from a rational viewpoint, means meaninglessness. The incoherence in almost all values-theories is parallel to such errors, via some at least implicit part of a theory contradicting another – especially via one part at least implicitly claiming its at least implicit value/standard is right and another part’s is wrong, and vice versa. So the theory in effect claims it is both right and wrong. A fully rational examination of how one should live would rule out all such value-theories, i.e., all such theories advocating how one should live. They cannot give rationally-unquestionable meaning to and in our lives.

More on those points:-

Of course, as well as consistency, coherence also requires positive, supportive or

pro- relationships. These will be further shown to fully exist, regarding a system involving practised directly-epistemic and moral etc values and, necessarily, rationality, only if the values are pro-rationality. (That system gives rationally-unquestionable meaning in and to life, and rationally-unquestionably answers Socrates’s question (A) and the related epistemic question B.)

In a limited sense, other coherent notions or values-theories exist. There can be coherence among false or irrational notions. However, they do not cohere maximally with rationality. Nazis had an in-part-coherent values-theory using rationality but merely as the necessary cognitive means to help practise non-pro-rationality racist, sexist, murderous values. It will be shown that any mutually-coherent *non*-pro-rationality values cannot be coherent in that full way in relation to *rationality*. This is compounded by the fact that, as will be shown, *non*-pro-rationality values *require* much rationality, e.g., in order for them to be knowable and practised reliably. E.g., to be sexist one must use rationality to know what a sex is and know which person has which sex. Similarly, any false or irrational notion, e.g., a pro-faith religious theory or a flat-Earth theory, and any coherence therein, or anywhere, requires rationality if the coherence or notion can be even known to exist or thought of. So any coherence among false, irrational or rationally-problematic values/notions is limited in that it only applies when their necessary involvement with rationality is ignored. Maximum possible *overall* coherence involves maximum coherence with the rationality necessarily involved.

Importantly, the meaning which believers in non-pro-rationality theories experience is only *subjective*. These believers can only believe their theories by ignoring or being ignorant of what overall coherence and hence rational-unquestionable pro-rationality mean. E.g., they do not consider the *objective* situation involving the fact that to believe a *non*-pro-rationality theory they must contradict themselves, and hence be incoherent, via using rationality and hence being *pro*-rationality here. Subjectively they at least implicitly think their theory is correct; hence it seems cognitively meaningful, and feels emotionally/evaluatively subjectively meaningful. Objectively their theories are not correct, not coherent. Objectively, any apparent meaningfulness here is only apparent, a delusion, only a belief – not knowledge. Various other types of such incoherence are discussed soon.

Concluding the Introduction:-

The Chris and the Romanian orphanage examples relate to A.P. Griffiths’s (1957-8) suggestion that the choosable conditions needed for rationality, namely certain practised values and factors, are necessarily uniquely immune from rational criticism. (This paper is partly a reinterpretation and development of Griffiths’s and other work.[[13]](#footnote-13))

This rational-unquestionability implies that, from rationality’s conceivable viewpoint, it would be obvious that pro-rationality is correct. (This is parallel to the fact that, from, e.g., a Nazi viewpoint (or any moral etc viewpoint V), being pro-Nazi (or pro-V) is correct (and subjectively meaningful)). With this, rationality cannot self-coherently view, and hence inherently cannot view, any other general value than ‘Be pro-rationality’ as correct. So no other, non-pro-rationality value or way of life is rationally-unquestionable (and is rationally-unquestionable meaningful). Relatedly, to *rationally* question, doubt or reject pro-rationality*,* as implied above one must first think via pro-rationality values in order to do so. This incoherence shows those values cannot be rationally or correctly questioned, doubted or rejected. They are absolutes, hence ‘categorical imperatives’ – though not what Kant specifically meant by that general term.

At the very least, unlike other values, pro-rationality values are uniquely close to or coherent with rationality – because coherence involves a supportive, *pro*- relationship. Or, as with the Chris example, directly-epistemic and many other pro-rationality, moral etc values are necessary functional aspects *of* human rationality: we cannot be rational without at least implicitly simultaneously practising those values. And they are coherent with instrumentally pro-rationality factors and the values prescribing them. (Being meaningful involves being coherent, and vice versa.) Here, as discussed later, for persons living via pro-rationality theory, the coherence involved is both subjectively and objectively coherent.

With this, coherence among pro-rationality emotional and cognitive factors is both subjectively and objectively rationally-unquestionably meaningful.

Pro-rationality moral, social, political, legal and other values which are not obviously epistemic are related to and sometimes the same as pro-rationality directly-epistemic values. E.g., being non-sexist and non-racist is directly-epistemically and morally, socially, politically and legally pro-rationality-required. And to know what a pro-rationality moral etc value is, one must first practise the pro-rationality directly-epistemic values needed to acquire that knowledge.

In sum, those directly-epistemic values are fundamental regarding knowingly and meaningfully practising anything else pro-rationality or non-pro-rationality. All values-theories must start somewhere, and only pro-rationality theory starts and *stays* coherent with the foundational or presuppositional, necessary, epistemic values *any* theory must use and hence practise to start a theory. So only pro-rationality values are rationally-unquestionable by anyone’s or any theory or thinking. E.g., to start with the (rationally-questionable) premise ‘All persons naturally seek happiness’, one must apply those pro-rationality, epistemic values to know what the words ‘persons’, ‘happiness’ etc even mean.

Regarding Socrates’s ‘How should one live?’ and (the) meaning in/of life:-

It will be further shown that the theory is highly practicable, including via being motivating and deeply humanly-meaningful, including regarding the education necessary for rationality/knowledge. A dull, narrow or cerebral education and life is not pro-rationality-optimal or epistemically-optimal. (It will be shown that, regarding humans and their practices, ‘Be pro-rationality’ solves problems involved with the too-narrow, cerebral, ‘Be rational’ and ‘Be knowledgeable’.) Rationally-unquestionably meaningful passionate emotional engagement, happiness, love, freedom, flourishing, diversity and imagination are often needed – within the liberal, fair, caring, humanly-meaningful education, society and life further exemplified soon.

Pro-rationality persons would regard practising pro-rationality values as maximally meaningful via the highest-priority these persons would give to those values. The importance and rationality-requiredness of pro-rationality factors, especially those (potentially) coherent with human nature, e.g., love of children, would clearly be highly motivating and relatedly meaningful.

The Chris and Romanian examples imply that pro-rationality epistemic values/factors concern society, emotions and individuals' lives generally. It will be further shown that pro-rationality epistemic-values-theory is generally (universally) applicable.

That applicability includes the a-rationality, namely the irrelevant-to-pro-rationality and hence permissible according to pro-rationality theory. A-rationality is elsewhere[[14]](#footnote-14) shown to involve fairness and equality, great diversity, total freedom to do whatever you like here, and hence much happiness – giving further, permissible meaningfulness to one’s life. Pro-rationality, epistemic values allow such freedom etc.

**Section 2: Further Regarding Rationality, Rights, Values, Meaning, Knowledge, Emotions and Coherence.**

‘Be rational’ is the appropriate general aim for rational computers in that rationality is their only possible, internal, general aim. That aim is inadequate for humans and for our rationally-unquestionable, coherent epistemic development. (Explaining this leads to explaining why ‘Be knowledgeable’ is inadequate.):-

Very unlike rational computers, we are living, reproducing, consciously believing and choice-making beings with intentions involving various and varying values – and emotions. We hate, love, fear, desire, hope and so on. We have biological instincts, drives and needs, and parents, a nation, sexuality, race and gender, plus senses, inconsistencies, irrationality, sociability, socialisability, rewards/punishments, humor, health-concerns, variable will-power, gullibility, imagination and plans. And we are aware of death and our mortality, of time, causability, consequences and much else.

Important here is the need to make choices, especially regarding values and hence how one should live. This includes how to treat others – regarding upbringing/education, (un)selfishness, power, freedoms, rights, fairness, responsibility, violence, caring, sexual behaviour and much else. For us choices/values are unavoidable because while conscious we must do something, i.e., practise, including just be still, rest or think. And conscious practices involve the at least implicit choice to do A rather than B or C etc. All choices involve values. Even if A is the choice to choose via chance, e.g., coin-tosses, this involves valuing chance-made decisions rather than having to decide among B and C etc.

Our instincts, feelings, believing, desiring, valuing etc tend to make our lives subjectively meaningful. The powerful instinct to live tends to normally make us feel life is worth living and death worth avoiding. This instinct alone normally makes life very subjectively meaningful.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Rational computers do not and cannot concern themselves with such things (except in that *we* can be concerned with such things and get computers to give us information regarding our concerns, as discussed soon). Computers have no instinct or wish to live and to find life meaningful. They have no life.

Our differences from a purely rational being, or rationality-as-such, as in a computer, and the coherence crucial for rationality and rational-justification, require that regarding our *practices*, including directly-epistemic practices such as evidence-seeking, the fundamental value/prescription for us cannot be ‘Be rational’. ‘Be rational’ is not the best answer, not the most coherent answer, to Question A. Various arguments below show why, though being rational seems on first view to be of obvious epistemic value. A simplified argument-via-example follows, introducing various notions explained further soon, and further showing that emotions are important for pro-rationality theory. The example also relates to Kant regarding whether one should lie, including to an intending murderer:-

Sally knows about a psychopathic, highly-irrational, irredeemable mass-murderer of children. He asks Sally where his next intended victims are, and Sally knows where. Here it would be pro*-rationality* to lie and hence be *irrational* in that lies are false. Being irrational seems to be of negative epistemic value. However, situationality (context) and the recently-discussed unique aspects of humans need to be considered in the overall view here. Again, it is rational to have an overall view. That lie would send the murderer where Sally hopes police can capture him. Sally does this, overruling her fear that he may escape and vengefully kill her. (His emotions are anti-rationality.) Sally teaches these children, and has evidence they are potentially more pro-rationality and rational, hence of more epistemic value, than the murderer could ever be. Here Sally’s pro-rationality, via her chosen irrationality (lying), will as far as she could know mean probably more rationality long-term. (The previously-mentioned normal natural feeling that children are intrinsically-valuable is an associated extrinsically-valuable, meaningful, instrumental pro-rationality factor for Sally here.)

If Sally’s aim was simply ‘Be rational’ as in ‘Always be truthful’, her aim would be what can seem of epistemic value. However, that aim or choice/value would in-effect be anti-rationality, i.e., overall (e.g., over practices, time and persons) incoherent with the children’s probable future (pro‑)rationality. A truthful Sally would be only partly or incompletely coherent with rationality, namely coherent only from a limited, narrow, extremely-short-term (computer-like) viewpoint. Long-term, the children, if alive, would probably produce more rationality in the world than if murdered. Faced with the murderer, it is rational (correct) that irrationality via lying is the more pro-rationality alternative overall. Here, unlike a simply ‘Be rational’ (always truthful) computer, Sally can and does know and care about the children, and about their probable future – if alive. The fully rational human view is an overall view, which includes a long-term view and a concerning-all-relevant-possible-practices, situationally-relative view. The rational view is also a realistic (objective) view, which includes knowing that one can only do what is possible. Regarding intending to be pro-rationality, it was only possible for Sally to make what was in that situation probably the most pro-rationality choice as far as she could know. This is all we can rationally-unquestionably do regarding Question A here.

Here the epistemic, pro-rationality values discussed in the Chris example were applied at that overall, higher or meta- level involving a long-term-view, not just at the overviewed, simple ‘Be rational’, immediate, ‘Always be truthful’ lower level. That level is not where the most rationally-unquestionable answer to Question A can be found.

In sum:- For reasons such as those in the previous few paragraphs, humans and their epistemic development (education) and lives generally need a general aim or value different from rationality-as-such as in computers’ very limited, simple ‘Be rational’. Humans need ‘Be pro-rationality’ if they aim to be as rational and as coherent with rationality as possible long-term. Here we find the best answer to Question A, the answer best fitting with rationality. Rationality would conceivably question or reject whatever means less rationality or the incoherent-with-rationality.

So the only rationally-unquestionable epistemic values or virtues are pro-rationality. Otherwise there is an overall incoherence, inherently ruled out by rational, epistemic standards/values. And, again, there are directly-epistemic virtues/values – and indirectly-epistemic, moral, social etc values/virtues.

For Sally, practising those values/virtues made her life both subjectively meaningful and objectively rationally-unquestionably meaningful. She had a rationally-unquestionable right and related responsibility to lie to save the children.

Some somewhat preliminary conclusions so far, needing further discussion soon:-

The rationally-unquestionable answer to ‘How to achieve rationally-unquestionable meaning in life.’, and to Socrates’s ‘How should one live?’, is: ‘One should live only in pro-rationality ways’ or, for short, ‘Be pro-rationality’. (‘Be pro-rationality’ implies being free to do or be anything a-rationality, discussed later and elsewhere.[[16]](#footnote-16))

Question A’s answer is inherently interrelated to the answer to Question B, ‘How can one know how one should live?’. Question B’s answer is implied above. The question can be interpreted to be asking how can we know the right way to live. The above implies we can know how to avoid the incoherence with rationality which means being rationally-unquestionably wrong. This and the above implies that we can know what is rationally-unquestionably right – by examining what is most coherent or best fits with rationality and hence the rationally-unquestionable, namely ‘Be pro-rationality’.

With this, we can know it is rationality which produces knowledge, including via rationality’s foundations such as ‘A thing is what it is, and not not what it is’ being foundations for knowledge – and hence for the rationality/knowledge via which we survive, e.g., via knowing a fast approaching truck is what it is, via knowing food is food, knowing what is food, and so on. So we can know rationality is unavoidable in that it is necessary for our meaningful thinking and existence/survival, and hence that the only way to live as coherently and hence as right (or as not-wrong) as possible – is to live via values coherent with that unavoidability, that necessity, namely the pro-rationality values inherent therein and the related practised values which are instrumentally necessary for rationality. With this, we can know what is rationally-unquestionably meaningful in life.

With this, as suggested above, the meaning of ‘meaning’ is at least somewhat incoherent unless it is rationally-unquestionable, and ‘ rationally-unquestionably meaningful’ involves overall coherence. These notions are at least implicitly further reinforced below, when further discussing (in)coherence.

Also, we can use the previously-discussed meta-knowledge about values which shows us we can know what values are most coherent with rationality, and hence are as rationally-justifiable as is possible for values. Via such knowledge we can also know that alternatives to ‘Be pro-rationality’ are incoherent internally and incoherent with rationality, and so not rationally-unquestionably meaningful, as discussed further below. Via such knowledge we can rationally-unquestionably answer Question B as far as possible. (Again, all human rationality/knowledge involves certain problems, e.g., some unavoidable circularity. So we can only do what is possible, e.g., it is impossible to avoid the unavoidable. However, clearly, a great deal is possible. Otherwise, again, e.g., we could not survive – or know of such problems and possibilities.)

Further discussion of those answers and conclusions:-

Here, again, epistemic virtues and their interrelated coherence with human rationality and pro-rationality need to involve emotions. Question A’s answer must involve emotions. The normal humans need for a meaningful life must involve (preferably positive) emotions. These need knowledge: Sally’s unselfish caring here is an indirectly pro-rationality emotion associated with meta- or highest-level (overall-viewing) pro-rationality knowledge. Here that overall view includes knowledge regarding the children and murderer contexted by knowledge that being pro-rationality is rationally-unquestionable.

Meta-pro-rationality knowledge decides which emotions (and other moral etc practices/factors) are situationally appropriate (as far as can be known). And, helped by the brain’s pre-frontal cortex and the frontal lobes’ connections with the brain’s emotional areas, this knowledge helps train (hard-wire) one’s brain to promote such emotions – e.g., Sally’s unselfish caring and ‘direct pro-rationality emotion’. Direct pro-rationality emotion, via those connections, is associated with meta-pro-rationality knowledge, thereby becoming the emotion directly motivating human rationality to know what is (as far as one can know) most pro-rationality in a certain situation. This emotion then helps that epistemic-emotional training. (Rationally-unquestionable epistemic development (education) would maximise the training/connections, e.g., via using the brain pruning, plasticity and hard-wiring prominent during adolescence discussed by Sisk, C.L. and Foster, D.L. (2004); and Giedd, J.N. et al (2004)) Clearly, an objectively rationally-unquestionable meaningful life involves an often subjectively powerful emotionally meaningful life. Further here:-

Instead of Sally’s motivation regarding the children, her rationality, being purely instrumental, could have been primarily motivated otherwise, e.g., by her fear of being vengefully murdered. Yet her meta-pro-rationality knowledge and associated coherent-therewith pro-rationality emotions, involving her will-power, ruled that they should rule. This involved over-ruling any competing, anti-rationality emotion, e.g., her fear here. (As exemplified later, some fears are pro-rationality.)

Sally’s valuing of courage, of the children’s lives, and so on here, show the interrelation of directly-epistemic and moral, social and educational etc values/factors. A crucial factor is the emotional meaningfulness of saving the children.

Pro-rationality values/factors include valuing pro-rationality emotions/motivations. Emotions such as Sally’s dominant ones have an in-practice supportive, positive, pro- relation to rationality, crucially helping to maintain/develop it long-term. So pro-rationality emotions and anti-rationality emotions are crucially important issues for pro-rationality values-theory, and hence for how one should (meaningfully) live. As explained further soon, conscious emotionally-desired aims, which are informed by knowledge (at least of what the aims are), (and often by mere beliefs,) are the only intended aims we can have. This paper involves the pro-rationality-knowledge-informed emotionally-desired aim of working towards a rationally-unquestionable, humanly-meaningful values-theory. To continue doing that, more concerning emotion and rationality:-

Human rationality’s general epistemic end-aim is knowledge. Emotions, say greed, can direct rationality to acquire the specific knowledge needed to achieve aims or ends valued by the emotion, e.g., here, wealth or academic status. Such aims are external to those of our rationality-as-such. ‘Rationality-as-such’ means ‘rationality internally’. Rationality-as-such is as in a computer correctly doing sums, lacking emotion, unable to feel greed or value the wealth, status or anything a human using the computer feels/values and hence aims at via the sums. Again, rationality is purely instrumental. Similar to the evolution of muscles, our rationality exists due to humans having evolved to incorporate (emotionally-directable) rationality-as-such as a useful tool to help achieve, here via knowledge, the (naturally-normal emotionally-desired) survival (of one’s and/or one’s group’s genes). To reliably achieve that emotionally-desired (and other) end(s), only rationality can reliably show/give us the correct means. The correct cognitive means is epistemic – knowledge. If chance or a mistake somehow showed us a correct means, it is only our rationality which could know the correctness and know how to correctly make use of the means. Ultimately, rationality and hence knowledge is needed, not ignorance or mistakes.

If rationality sought to be mistaken, i.e., irrational, it would contradict its internal, fundamental nature.[[17]](#footnote-17) This is impossible. Relatedly, humanity could not have survived via being always or mostly mistaken. (Later it is argued that rationality’s survival-necessity for us relates to one way to rationally-justify certain moral etc values as far as possible.)

Importantly, being a very open capacity, rationality can be directed to achieve much else besides survival. It can be directed to know about values, though arguably these often relate at least indirectly to survival, e.g., via helping the group social cohesion without which its individual members, especially infants, cannot survive. Rationality can also be directed to acquire obviously non-survival-helpful knowledge, e.g., of all footballers’ names, and to-be-practised knowledge of how oneself or one’s group can suicide. Rationality-as-such is neutral regarding which knowledge to acquire. Emotions are inherently not neutral, as in desiring to survive, or to know correct values, or to know all footballers’ names, and as in suicidal depression.

So, again, rationality is necessarily directed by emotion/motivation. However, rationality or reason need not be merely an unthinking slave to our passions or emotions. Rationality is a way of thinking. It can produce the meta-knowledge concerning emotion/motivation which shows that itself, rationality, is motivated directly by pro-rationality motivation, meaning coherence here – coherence meaning rationality can justify (as far as possible …) certain related emotions and values it can be directed by. These are coherent with pro-rationality motivation, unlike other emotions and thereto-related values – which can and often do (incoherently) direct pro-rationality motivation to direct rationality to do *their* *non*-pro-rationality bidding. (Here it is incoherently, mistakenly believed that the associated subjective emotional meaningfulness involves correct values.) However, as with Sally, that need not happen. Pro-rationality motivation can be the slave of dominant non-pro-rationality motivation – or pro-rationality motivation can be dominant, ruling all other emotions.

Expanding on those two paragraphs:-

Unless turned on, human rationality is only an inactive potential, like a turned-off computer or resting muscle. As Hume suggests, to do its epistemic work, human rationality needs to be turned on, i.e., motivated, via emotion. Rationality-as-such can be conceptually separated from emotion, and is physically separated as in a computer-operator’s emotions (and their aims) being physically external to the computer’s purely internal rational functioning. Both can obviously connect as a system involving the human operator’s emotions directing the computer to be turned on and achieve emotionally-desired aims. With human rationality-as-such, presumably something parallel happens within brains. (Something like Fodor’s (1983) notion of separate but connectable brain modules seems applicable here.) (Again, educators can help persons to have their rationality directed and developed via pro-rational emotions, e.g., via educators directing adolescent persons’ brain pruning, plasticity and hard-wiring thus. Regarding Question A and a rationally-unquestionably meaningful life, this is an aspect of how educators should live.)

Human rationality can be motivated or dominated by various emotions felt to be meaningful, e.g., selfishness involving desiring an education aimed at knowing how to achieve a highly-valued purely personal end, e.g., wealth or status. Yet sometimes humans are simply curious, motivated just to know something, e.g., crossword or riddle answers, without any at-the-time intention and hence motivation to use the knowledge. Curiosity is often a powerful emotion/motivator. Curiosity-as-such is (potentially[[18]](#footnote-18)) pro-rationality motivation, and vice versa.

Sometimes, with no conscious intention, we simply acquire knowledge, e.g., that a bird flew past. Here and with curiosity presumably there is an unconscious motivation to initially notice/know things somewhat in general, because some things affect our survival or may do. E.g., it is survival-helpful to notice/know where food, water, danger and shelter are. We need and intend to know much, in case it is useful. So rationality is a very open capacity. With this, curiosity or pro-rationality motivation is a very open, very directable motivation. Again, it can be directed or dominated by other, non- pro-rationality motivation. Rationally-unquestionable, pro-rationality education needs to direct that epistemic capacity and the curiosity motivating it. Here curiosity, informed by the meta-knowledge that ‘Be pro-rationality’ is the only rationally-unquestionable end or general value, becomes the recently-mentioned *dominant* (directly) pro-rationality motivation/emotion. Thence rationality can be directed towards and via that end/value. Only here is there coherence between rationality’s motivation and rationality’s only coherent-with-rationality end/aim. Because humans are both emotional/motivated and cognitive beings, only here can we coherently, rationally-unquestionably answer ‘How should one (meaningfully) live?’.

More concerning coherence, not primarily concerning emotion/motivation:-

Rationality is so open or unrestricted it allows one to choose to acquire knowledge about anything knowable, from knowledge about a vast number of facts/areas, or just a very narrow area. The knowledge need not be pro-rationality knowledge, i.e., knowledge used to maintain/increase (pro‑)rationality, i.e., knowledge concerning how one should live. So ‘Be knowledgeable’ or simply ‘Acquire knowledge’ or ‘Be curious’ is a rationally-questionable epistemic value/aim. As in the Sally example, it is only a meta‑pro-rationality knowledge’s overviewing which understands that issue, via understanding arguments such as the following:-

Importantly, regarding human practices, coherence requires that being dedicatedly coherently pro-rationality cannot simply mean one must only be rational as such, and hence acquire or be curious about simply *any* knowledge. Of course, no knowledge-as-such can be incoherent with or contradict rationality or any other knowledge. However, it is rationality-/knowledge-*related* *practices* which can be incoherent with rationality/knowledge – practices such as acquiring, storing, teaching and using knowledge, and other practices affecting rationality/knowledge. The latter, indirectly-epistemic practices include murdering Sally’s students and emotionally neglecting those Romanian orphans. The former, directly-epistemic practices include dedicatedly acquiring non-pro-rationality knowledge, e.g., learning all footballers’ names. Such knowledge can seem subjectively meaningful, but it is incoherent with our acquiring and practising pro-rationality knowledge. The time, energy and other resources used could be used in pro-rationality ways. (Section 3 (and Farrand (2016)) discuss(es) numerous ways, e.g., promoting the education, care, safety, intellectual and political freedoms and the mental and physical health epistemically optimal for acquiring and practising pro-rationality knowledge.)

Acquiring etc knowledge and affecting rationality/knowledge are epistemic practices. It is practices which are the ultimate concern of values-theories. Regarding our knowledge-*related* *practices*, it is acquiring etc and practising pro-*rationality* knowledge, i.e., pro-knowledge knowledge, i.e., pro-rationality rationality, which is the only fully coherent, self-coherent end-aim for rationality. This is because here rationality produces more rationality/knowledge which produces more rationality/knowledge, and so on, over time. (Or, at least, rationality/knowledge is maintained over time.) Only here is knowledge fully coherent with the rationality necessary to produce knowledge. This implies that education and research should only involve positively affecting rationality, which involves acquiring, storing, teaching and using only pro-rationality knowledge – with ‘using’ having universal implications, discussed in Section 3. (Persons also may (not should) use rationality in a-rationality ways, suggested soon.)

Recent points show that it is not epistemic values as such which are as rationally-unquestionable as possible. E.g., consider the directly-epistemic value/prescription, ‘Value and acquire evidence’. Recent comments concerning acquiring knowledge as such, or simply *any* knowledge, apply to that epistemic value/prescription.

The overall most rationally-unquestionable answer to ‘How should one (meaningfully) live?’ was shown above to be: ‘One should live only in pro-rationality (or a-rationality) ways’ or, for short, ‘Be pro-rationality’.[[19]](#footnote-19) An important conclusion of the previous few paragraphs is that that answer crucially involves living via that pro-rationality knowledge. To be pro-rationality we need that knowledge so we know how to live thus, e.g., know what to practise in order to be as pro-rationality as possible.

The most important pro-rationality knowledge, answering Question B, is the meta-knowledge that ‘Be pro-rationality’ is the only rationally-unquestionable end. This meta-knowledge combines with our natural curiosity to produce direct pro-rationality motivation/emotion which can rule all other emotion/motivation.

Concluding/summarising recent discussions, and introducing further discussions:-

Knowledge is the product of rationality or epistemic practices, but being pro-rationality does not simply mean acquiring knowledge merely for the sake of being rational or having knowledge as such. Anyway, it would be completely unclear (incoherent) regarding which knowledge to acquire (or teach) among the infinite possibilities. Those possibilities include counting every pebble and similar pointless or trivial overall in-effect anti-rationality knowledge. Knowledge-as-such is the product of rationality-as-such or the simple ‘Be rational’. Comments above concerning the latter two can be adapted to apply to knowledge-as-such or the simple ‘Be knowledgeable’ or ‘Acquire knowledge’ or ‘Practise directly-epistemic values’.

Only a meta‑pro-rationality knowledge’s overviewing can see what uses of rationality/knowledge are fully or overall pro-rationality and hence overall coherent with rationality over time etc – and with the above-discussed unavoidable foundations of rationality/knowledge and of all meaningful thought. This meta-knowledge answers Question B, ‘How can we know how one should live?’, which relates to the answer to Question A. To rationally-unquestionably answer B requires that meta-knowledge being motivated by dominant direct pro-rationality emotion – meaning epistemic-emotional coherence here. The rationally-unquestionable answer to A includes requiring one’s life being motivated only by pro-rationality direct and indirect emotions – also meaning epistemic-emotional coherence here. Dominant direct pro-rationality informed motivation values and hence chooses whatever indirect pro-rationality emotions (and other factors) are pro-rationality-needed. E.g., with Sally, courage was one, and those Romanian neglected orphans needed compassionate sympathy and practised love.

Recent paragraphs exemplified lacks of such epistemic-emotional coherence: they exemplified how rationality can be used in indirectly anti-rationality ways. Non-pro-rationality emotion was involved, e.g., curiosity un-informed by that meta-knowledge. Rationality can also be used in directly anti-rationality ways, motivated by obviously non-pro-rationality emotion. This can involve non-trivial uses of non-trivial knowledge. E.g., Nazis, partly motivated by racist hate, used rationality to acquire advanced chemical, weapons etc knowledge used to destroy millions of at least potentially pro-rationality people and their rationality. Nazis were only *partly* or inconsistently pro-rationality, i.e., only to the necessary minimal, purely instrumental, limited degree (discussed further soon). Similarly regarding persons uncritically teaching/learning primarily what various present societies/governments want taught/learnt, e.g., knowledge and un-evidenced beliefs useful for, e.g., fascist, racist, sexist, religious, nationalist and/or socio-economic-classist societies/politicians.

So, like computers, human rationality-as-such or epistemic practices need only be pro-rationality to that very limited, partial, instrumental degree. Here there is no acted-on, overall, meta‑pro-rationality view/knowledge concerning practices, aims, emotions etc over time, persons etc, i.e., the view needed to be pro-rationality in an overall-coherent way. Being partly or inconsistently pro-rationality involves incoherences discussed above (and below). This is because the other part(s) involve(s) non-pro-rationality, or the inconsistency does (as shown further shortly).

Non-pro-rationality aims/values vary incoherently among and within persons and values-theories, and hence conflict. They are also incoherent with rationality via not being fully or only pro-rationality. Such pluralistic and other incoherence cannot be in rationality’s nature or rationally-justified.

Again, logically and hence rationally-justifiably, there can only be one right general, fundamental value. Plural fundamental right values would contradict each other, and the non-pro-rationality ones would contradict pro-rationality and hence the rationally-unquestionable – and hence question the rationally-unquestionable. The right cannot contradict the right or the rationally-unquestionable. That would be incoherent, irrational.

The indirectly pro-rationality epistemic (moral, social etc) values and directly pro-rationality epistemic values all come under that one, right, general value. This means coherence. Coherence is rationality-required, and hence conceivably valued by rationality, meaning coherence is a pro-rationality epistemic value.

In sum, if something is incoherent or does not fit overall with(in) rationality, it cannot in any rational, meaningful, intelligible, non-delusional, coherent sense be considered right. This implies rationally-unquestionable answers to Questions A and B and regarding (the) meaning in/of life. Rationality gives us rationally-unquestionable cognitive meaning – regarding knowing what trucks, toilets, pebbles and all other things are. And rationally-unquestionable, pro-rationality values give us rationally-unquestionable moral etc meaning in and to life. Only here are rationality and rationally-unquestionable values and meaning coherent. Only here are our cognitions and evaluations coherent. Otherwise we are mistaken.

Next, (temporarily ignoring a-rationality,) arguments showing that other contradictions or incoherences occur with non-pro-rationality, and further implying complementary answers to Questions A and B and regarding (the) meaning in/of life:-

Persons accepting non-pro-rationality values-theories must use rationality as the epistemic means to achieve the survival needed to even have a theory, to know of their theory and its end(s), and to reliably achieve the other means to their end(s). Knowing is the product of our rationality. Non-pro-rationality theory-accepters must use rationality to know what each letter, word, phrase etc in their thinking here is and means – and to know how to think, write, say or read it. Otherwise they would not know what or how to think etc. All would be meaningless. (Life would be meaningless via the total confusion (incoherence).) Similarly regarding persons using rationality to reject pro-rationality theory, which all non-pro-rationality theory-accepters unavoidably do at least implicitly. They must at least use rationality to know what they are accepting, and this acceptance-knowledge implies what they reject. And they use rationality to implicitly or explicitly know how to accept/reject. Now, to use rationality is to at least implicitly choose to use it, i.e., to be pro-rationality here. Various points above show that along with rationality as such there must be other pro-rationality factors a person being rational must use and hence at least implicitly value. These factors include the required pro-rationality motivation. So being at least minimally pro*-*rationality is a survival-necessary means, a theory-understanding means, indeed a universally reliable-achievement-necessary means. Theory-accepting and theory-rejecting are achievements. Therefore, non-pro-rationality theory-accepters are pro-rationality regarding their means but not regarding their end(s). This is means-end incoherence, a type of self-contradiction or internal-incoherence. And this involves incoherence with rationality and with rationality’s inherent coherence: here theory-holders are only *partly* rational(ly-justified) or only partly coherent with rationality, only partly pro-rationality. Elsewhere they are anti-rationality: if one is not pro-rationality (or a-rationality), one is anti-rationality. There is no other option.

Means-end incoherence seems even more a major error when we further consider that pro-rationality is a *necessary,* *fundamental*, extremely common human epistemic-value:-

Again, when we value being rational, which happens whenever we at least implicitly intend to be rational, or use rationality, we necessarily at least implicitly value being pro-rationality. That is, we value the factors/values making our rationality possible. As Section 1 (e)-(f) shows, we intend to be and are rational thousands of times hourly, to avoid being irrational, i.e., mistaken. When we are mistaken, ‘mistake’ means we intended to be rational (right), but unintentionally missed being right. And intentionally being wrong means using rationality to know how to be wrong. Whatever we intend or think, we use rationality’s foundations so we can intend or think something, i.e., know that we are intending or thinking X rather than something else or nothing. So, at least implicitly, we conscious, practising, here-rational-beings necessarily use value being pro-rationality virtually permanently and universally, and do not question this. We view this as rationally-unquestionable.

That applies to using rationality to achieve whatever one’s highest-priority end is. (Plural highest-priority ends increase the incoherence discussed next.)

One’s highest-priority end is what is most meaningful for one in life. Valuing one’s highest-priority end is necessarily to at least implicitly value the means necessary to achieve the end. (Otherwise the end is not highest-priority.[[20]](#footnote-20)) Here the epistemic or cognitive means is rationality. And when we intend to be rational we at least implicitly necessarily value pro-rationality as the means to our rationality. That is, being pro-rationality is *fundamental* regarding intentionally reliably achieving what one finds most meaningful or what gives central meaning to one’s life: one’s highest-priority end – or achieving anything. Yet when we are rational and hence pro-rationality merely to achieve knowledge to achieve a valued non-pro-rationality end, we contradict that for-us necessary, pro-rationality fundamental value. We contradict part of ourselves, being hence self-incoherent, internally-incoherent, incoherent with (our) rationality. Here we are necessarily wrong. This can include being wrong regarding one’s highest-priority end – that which one finds most meaningful in life, and via which one answers ‘How should one live?’.

In sum:- ‘Be pro-rationality’ is uniquely inherently rationally-justified as a means, so no other means is. And ‘Be pro-rationality’ is also as far as possible rationally-justified as an end, and uniquely so. This proves there is only one way to be fully coherent and hence as right as possible – by choosing pro-rationality as one’s directly-epistemic and moral etc highest-priority end, rationality as the epistemic means to that end, pro-rational emotions as the motivational means thereto, and so on. This is the only way to be coherent with what for us is a fundamentally-necessary value. Coherence with the necessary also seems right as in being parallel to us cohering (agreeing) with the logically-necessary 1+2=3 or 1+1+1 is 1+1+1.

Recent discussion relates to a former point concerning coherence and values-theories: with all values-theories except pro-rationality theory, one part of a theory at least implicitly claims that its at least implicit value/standard is right and another part’s is wrong, and vice versa. So the theory in effect claims it is both right and wrong. Such coherence is further exemplified next:-

Comments concerning means-end incoherence apply relatedly to ‘form-content’ incoherence. Consider a valid reasoning form, e.g., ‘All Ps are Qs; R is a P; therefore R is a Q’. Suppose one uses that form to advocate a non-pro-rationality value. (E.g., ‘Everything that causes happiness is morally right. My (non-pro-rationality) political party makes me happy. Therefore my party is morally right.’) Here one’s form of thinking is rational, hence involving one being pro-rationality here. Yet this is incoherent with that valid form’s *content*, namely non-pro-rationality. All non-pro-rationality values-theories’ formally-valid arguments are incoherent here. Their formally-invalid arguments are obviously also wrong.

Further regarding coherence:-

The general rational requirement for coherence also applies regarding *believing* epistemic and moral etc theories. ‘I believe theory X’ means ‘I believe X is true’*.* The ‘is true’ aspect of believing is unavoidable. (One reason for that is: ‘I believe X is false (or may be)’ is equivalent to ‘I believe it is *true* that X is false (or may be)’.)

To believe X is to believe X is rational, i.e., true (as in ‘1+2=3 is rational, i.e., true’). With this, to believe X is to at least implicitly be pro-truth or pro-the-truth-of-X and to assume oneself is rational in that it is rational to believe what is true – and because it is rationality which discovers or recognises truth. This all assumes one is pro-rationality here, or pro-one’s-rationality via one believing X (is true). Anyone believing a non-pro-rationality values-theory is unavoidably pro-truth here and hence pro-rationality. This contradicts their theory not being pro-rationality overall. Their theory’s end(s), not being pro-rationality, must be anti-rationality, as explained above. Here too their mind or its theory, and their answer to ‘How should one (meaningfully) live?’, is self-contradictory, irrational, as with other recently-discussed incoherence. And, as recent points suggest, those believers’ internal incoherence means their anti-rationality end(s) imply, irrationally or incorrectly, that pro-rationality and hence rationality are wrong. (This implication implies it is wrong to believe X (or *anything*) is true, including that implication etc.) Such incoherence is rationally-unquestionably an epistemic and values-theoretical fundamental error. How could rationality or the rational, the right, be wrong, i.e., irrational? How could the rational and relatedly the pro-being-rational, i.e., the pro-rationality, be irrational or incorrect?

Concluding Sections 1 and 2:-

With practised pro-rationality knowledge/rationality, along with other factors rationality is a means to increase/maintain rationality overall as an end, e.g., long-term. Here means and end mutually support each other, i.e., are coherent over time. Here rationality is used in pro-rationality ways. Coherence is epistemically- or rationality-required. Pro*-*rationality rationality is obviously coherent. It coheres perfectly with (supports and causes more) (pro‑)rationality (and so on), or at least maintains (pro‑)rationality. (Here, uniquely, certain epistemic practices cohere perfectly with … the (pro‑)epistemic (and so on) ….) Because practised pro-rationality rationality means this unique coherence with rationality, it is hence uniquely rationally-unquestionable. It would conceivably be uniquely valued and advocated by rationality. This is also because rationality inherently seeks knowledge and is hence pro-knowledge – and being pro-knowledge means being pro-rationality.

As explained before those recent discussions of coherence, the coherence uniquely involved with pro-rationality epistemic values is evidence for them being rationally-justified (as far as possible …). Many other points above are further evidence. (*Evidence* regarding what one thinks meaningful in life makes such thinking secure and rationally-unquestionable, which strengthens that meaningfulness.) Also, the related fact that only rationality concerns evidence has important implications concerning interrelated directly-epistemic and moral etc values. Rationality’s inherent involvement with evidence includes acquiring, storing and using the evidence. In a sense this is another way in which pro-rationality values-theory is uniquely maximally evidence-based. Relatedly, pro-rationality theory is also uniquely inherently and self-coherently rationality-based and knowledge-based. No other values-theory can rationally make those claims, because the others are based primarily on other notions/aims, and are only partly coherent at best.

The combination of all such evidence for pro-rationality theory implies that rationality would conceivably regard pro-rationality directly-epistemic and indirectly-epistemic values as uniquely unquestionable, i.e., as correct and hence as rationally-justified as possible for values. What could ‘justify values’ coherently and intelligibly mean except to show that rationality would regard them thus?

Relatedly, as the Chris example showed, various practised pro-rationality, epistemic values are inherent, internal, essential, functional aspects *of* rationality – and this also suggests those values are rationally-unquestionable and as rationally-justified as possible for values. It also suggests that, from rationality’s viewpoint, in a sense pro-rationality is *self*-evidently correct or justified due to various pro-rationality values being inherent aspects *of* rationality it*self* and hence of rational-justification. Rationality would conceivably rationally (correctly) view aspects of itself as self-evidently correct. Similarly regarding the other practised pro-rationality, epistemic values being instrumentally necessary *for* rationality and rational-justification (and for these increasing).

Similarly regarding the only knowledge and practices rationality could self-coherently view as overall of value to it*self* – pro-rationality knowledge and practices. It is conceivably evident to rationality that they are *self*-evidently correct.

Many values-theories aim to show what end(s) humans should pursue, or what lives they should live – as fully rational beings. (E.g., Kant and Aristotle have some such aim.) The above shows that fully rational, coherent beings would inherently, necessarily, practise rationality-required values, and hence pursue only the end, ‘Be pro-rationality’. Those practices involve interrelated directly-epistemic and moral, social, political, legal, educational and other (e.g., health-care) values/factors. Non-sexism and non-racism are examples. Like fully rational beings, when a person is rational, say in arithmetic, the person knows at least implicitly that a correct sum remains correct regardless of who states it. The directly-epistemic and moral, social (e.g., non-racist) etc values necessarily involved are foundations or presuppositions for being fully rational. These values are in an important sense an ‘is’, not just an ‘ought’. This is further evidenced by the fact that we are naturally necessarily rational thousands of times hourly; otherwise there would be no meaning, no consciousness – of anything, including of oneself (as in ‘I think, therefore I exist’). We would also not know what to do to exist/survive. Soon we would not exist. Because rationality is that unavoidable ‘is’ for us alive, thinking beings, so any practised values inherent in that ‘is’ are also an ‘is’. And when we rationally-justify an epistemic statement, e.g., 1+2=3, in an important sense we rationally-justify the values necessarily involved, at least as far as possible for values. As far as possible, moral, social, political and legal etc values need to satisfy the same values/standards as knowledge or rationality does. Only rationality-required or pro-rationality values do that. This helps answer Questions A and B and (the) meaning in/of life issues as far as rationally possible.

The next two paragraphs rephrase those conclusions. The paragraphs were stated above as somewhat preliminary conclusions needing further discussion. That discussion is sufficiently over, so here they are finalised conclusions:-

The rationally-unquestionable answer to Socrates’s question, ‘How should one live?’, is: ‘One should live only in pro-rationality ways’ or, for short, ‘Be pro-rationality’. (‘Be pro-rationality’ implies being free to do or be anything a-rationality, discussed later and elsewhere.[[21]](#footnote-21))

Question A’s answer is inherently interrelated to the answer to Question B, ‘How can one know how one should live?’. Question B’s answer, via pro-rationality meta-knowledge, is implied above. The question can be interpreted to be asking how can we know the right way to live. The above implies we can know how to avoid the incoherence with rationality which means being rationally-unquestionably *wrong*. This and the above implies that we can know what is rationally-unquestionably *right* – by examining what is most coherent or best fits overall with rationality, namely the rationally-unquestionable, i.e., ‘Be pro-rationality’. With this, we can know it is rationality which produces knowledge, including via rationality’s foundations such as ‘A thing is what it is, and not not what it is’ being a foundation for knowledge – and hence for the rationality/knowledge via which we survive, e.g., via knowing that a fast approaching truck is what it is, via knowing food is food, and so on. So only the above answer to Question B is fully coherent with such survival-necessary rationality, with the foundations of rationality/knowledge and relatedly with the unavoidable foundations of all meaningful thought and hence meaningful lives. Also, we can use the meta-knowledge about values which shows we can know what values/rights are most coherent with rationality, and hence are as rationally-justifiable as is possible for values/rights. Via such knowledge we can also know that alternatives to ‘Be pro-rationality’ are incoherent internally and incoherent with rationality, as shown above.

Finally here, various points in Sections 1 and 2 imply that so-called ‘rational irrationality’ is incoherent, not rationally-justified, and is anti-rationality. ‘Rational irrationality’ is where it is believed instrumentally rational to be epistemically irrational regarding achieving one’s ends. E.g., some think that for a society to be epistemically irrational via citizens believing a religion or myth would be instrumentally useful and in that sense rational regarding achieving some end, such as a cohesive society – and meaning in life. The shared religious or mythical belief would help that desired cohesion and subjective meaning. The paper so far shows that a coherent definition of ‘rationality’ rules out any (actually misnamed) ‘rational irrationality’. Rationality-required coherence means pro-rationality is the only end rationality rationally-unquestionably aims at, not societal cohesion, a meaningful life as such, or anything else. (Pro-rationality persons would inherently cohere societally etc, via pro-rationality knowledge and shared values and shared meaningfulness in their lives. They would inherently be interpersonally peaceful.)

Sally’s use of irrationality via lying is not a case of ‘rational irrationality’. Her use was a case of pro-rationality irrationality, a fundamentally, unique type of irrationality – one overseen and directed by pro-rationality meta-knowledge.

**Section 3: Other Representative Practical Applications**

Pro-rationality values-theory concerns all our intended practices and our whole lives – because any rationally-unquestionable value inherently requires coherent application, i.e., universal application. With this, it is logically (rationally) necessary that, as with any end (or thing), all else is either positive, negative or neutral in relation to it. The end prescribes the positive, forbids the negative, and permits anything neutral. So pro-rationality, epistemic theory has universal practical applications. It rationally investigates which practices affect rationality and which do not, and promotes those with positive effects, opposes the negative, and liberally permits all that does not affect rationality, namely the a-rationality.

This paper will further show that rationality is affected by a vast range of moral, educational, emotional, legal, social, health-care, political, economic, environmental and other factors.[[22]](#footnote-22) First, emotions need more discussion. This will clearly further exemplify the deep human-meaningfulness of pro-rationality epistemic-values-theory:-

Various emotions (motivations) in certain situations are pro-rationality. These are epistemically-required, rationality-required emotions. (The term ‘epistemic emotions’ is at least somewhat appropriate.) Dominant direct pro-rationality motivation is our curiosity instinct or drive, informed by meta-pro-rationality knowledge, thence driven to acquire only pro-rationality knowledge (except that this meta-knowledge includes knowing that acquiring a-rationality knowledge is permissible). To achieve the coherence etc argued for above, this informed emotion needs to be the fundamental, primary motivation – dominant. This is not impossible. It can be easy. Again, via natural selection we are often naturally powerfully driven (motivated) to be curious, and normal humans can easily and often are curious about how one should live, or about what is the right thing to do. Being curious and fulfilling one’s curiosity are meaningful to normal humans, and this can be pro-rationality. Normal humans can easily (inherently emotionally) desire to have the correct, rationally-unquestionable answer to question A. Pro-rationality emotion can help fulfil that desire, with education helping to direct normal persons’ curiosity in meaningful, pro-rationality, coherent ways.

So persons can be naturally normally emotionally keen (driven) to seek pro-rationality knowledge, finding this very meaningful. This is even moreso the case because having direct pro-rationality motivation as primary requires having many other thereby-ruled-in naturally positively-experienced indirectly pro-rationality emotions/motivations. This was mentioned above. E.g., one potentially indirectly pro-rationality, highly meaningful emotion is the powerful instinct for normal humans to care for children. Again, experiencing the objects of such emotions as intrinsically-valuable and highly positive, e.g., seeing happy, safe children, is potentially of pro-rationality extrinsic value. So, if needed, dominant direct pro-rationality motivation would promote such emotions. They help give meaning to one’s life.

That natural, directly pro-rationality motivation, combined with that meta-pro-rationality knowledge, would rule (out) motivations/emotions competing with the ruled-in, promoted emotions, as with Sally. (That combination is like the only motivation/emotion Kant saw as truly valuable: the one involved in respect for the moral law.)

Other emotions needing to be ruled-in to help that normal emotional drive, pro-rationality motivation, include a compassionate desire to help make the world a rationally-unquestionably better place, and sympathy for children and others lacking pro-rationality resources, as in those Romanian orphanages, and in many societies or groups world-wide. Various emotional factors are needed so persons’ meta-knowledge-informed curiosity can optimally acquire the pro-rationality knowledge needed, e.g., to help such children have the resources, e.g., affection, which they need to be alive and more pro-rationality.

Normal humans’ natural survival instinct normally strongly motivates oneself to stay alive, and hence to stay finding life meaningful. This arguably generalises to others one values, e.g., Sally wants to keep her students alive. So the strong emotion here can be pro-rationality. This is yet another *natural* pro-rationality factor. Pro-rationality theory is not divorced from normal human nature and needs: a great many aspects of human nature can cohere with (other) aspects of being pro-rationality.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Clearly, there are rights and responsibilities here, e.g., the rationally-unquestionable right children have to pro-rationality affection, life and care in general, plus the adult responsibility to provide such factors. The general point here applies to all practicable pro-rationality factors for all persons, e.g., education and health-care.

Children lacking pro-rationality-required affection would be depressed. There are general issues regarding depression, i.e., not just regarding such children. Depression for anyone can be so emotionally and cognitively disabling that one lacks curiosity and is often not rational. Here one needs whatever helps avoid that lack of directly pro-rationality motivation/curiosity. Happiness or less unhappiness, including via minimising any cognitively-disabling depression, is a general human pro-rationality emotional need. Happiness-promoting factors here could include types of entertainment, exercise, humor, love, friendships, pets, music, peace, meditation, diet, nature, sunshine, sex, medication and family psychotherapy. Schools, colleges and universities, being epistemic institutions, can and should help in all such areas, at least indirectly, as part of a holistic education. Those factors mean practising associated pro-rationality sub-values, say ‘Graham’s school should facilitate him exercising with friends in fun ways in nature (to help maximise his pro-rationality), and help his family and health-carers to help him here’. Various subjective experiences which educational (epistemic) institutions can promote, including certain artistic experiences, could be important happiness-increasing factors for all normal humans/students. Such experiences are aspects of what can make life rationally-unquestionable meaningful.

Happiness is a mental-health factor potentially helpful for improving many other pro-rationality factors, including the general motivation and ability to practise pro-rationality knowledge. (Happiness-as-such is of course not a pro-rationality aim.) The pro-rationality-optimal on-average degree of happiness seems flexibly somewhere well between suffering so disabling that rationality is impossible, and medium-to-long-term drug-induced or other extreme bliss meaning ignorance and/or lack of pro-rationality motivation and focus.[[24]](#footnote-24) However, such issues are complex and somewhat uncertain. E.g., being (non-disablingly) unhappy can motivate searching for pro-rationality knowledge, e.g., unhappiness regarding diseases which disaffect pro-rationality can motivate persons to search for cures. Here unhappiness is an aspect of a rationally-unquestionable type of meaningfulness, and of one way some persons should live (temporarily). However, along with such unhappiness there is arguably a type of happiness due to self-respect via knowing oneself is at least doing one’s best or intends to. And there is potentially more pro-rationality happiness overall, long-term, via acquiring the knowledge, e.g., cures for brain cancers.

For those potentially highly pro-rationality beings, young children, pro-rationality physical and mental health involves many emotions in the children and their educators, parents and other carers. Children need to be normally at least moderately happy here. This requires humor, other fun, non-abusive, sympathetic, secure, peaceful, altruistic caring and love, including physical affection, all of which a holistic education can promote, including out of school. As exemplified by Section 1’s discussion of Romanian orphanages, to not get such factors seriously disaffects emotional, cognitive/epistemic and other brain development. This disaffects children’s pro-rationality potential permanently.

Adults often have emotional needs similar to children’s, and need other factors involving emotions, e.g., avoiding a frustrating, mentally-consuming lack of fulfilling sex, and avoiding mentally-disabling workplace stress. Similarly, pro-rationality physical health and safety are needed to help educators be in the emotional state needed to optimally teach pro-rationality knowledge and related epistemic skills. Achieving such health and safety may require pro-rationality (non-disabling) fear – of illness, danger and of inability to be such educators. And so on. Similarly for parents and other carers.

Emotional and other mental health is obviously important because human cognitive, epistemic, rational events occur mentally. Numerous factors are needed to help with the mental health needed to be optimally pro-rationality, including in moral, social etc areas. Rational cognitive psychotherapy is an obvious example. E.g., consider a patient who suddenly irrationally believes all food is poisoned with cyanide, and who henceforth refuses to eat. The patient can be given evidence, via chemical tests of food, that the patient is mistaken. And others can provide evidence by eating the food and not dying. With no counter-evidence, the patient can come to practise the epistemic, pro-rationality valuing of evidence, and thereby come to reject that delusion, and become a person more able to be more pro-rationality in life generally. This would include the moral/social issue of confidently, without paranoia and associated depression and/or anger, happily eating food others offer. (Such happiness can be pro-rationality.)

In sum, this person’s life would become more rationally meaningful, making in more likely to become pro-rationally meaningful.

Similarly regarding other rational cognitive psychotherapy, e.g., involved in educating (patients and persons generally) regarding the valuing of evidence needed to practise various pro-rationality moral and physical health requirements, e.g., non-smoking, exercising and overeating.

Similarly regarding non-sexism, non-racism and so on. These are directly-epistemically required, as shown above – and they are indirectly-epistemic, moral, social etc factors needed for persons to achieve optimal pro-rationality happiness. Being discriminated against and hence feeling humiliated, depressed or angry, and hence unhappy, is anti-rationality in various ways.

In sum, pro-rationality, epistemic factors often crucially include emotions. Other examples of pro-rationality emotions are those involved in the soon-discussed resilience, will-power, rationally-confident open-mindedness, non-egoism, non-sexism, non-racism, friendliness and sometimes humor needed for the rational positive pro-rationality criticism of oneself and others often needed in education/academia and life generally.

Again, there are rights and responsibilities here and regarding all practicable pro-rationality factors for all persons. Fulfilling one’s responsibilities (duties) here, including practising one’s own rights, can be viewed as virtues coming under ‘Be pro-rationality’. These rights, responsibilities and virtues are at least implicit in the following discussion of more examples of the theory’s practical, directly-epistemic and moral, social, political and legal etc applicability – examples not primarily focusing on emotion:-

First, so-called ‘free speech’, The term ’free communication’ is more appropriate than ‘free speech’, which is too narrow a term. E.g., facial expressions, body language, art, writing, photos and so on can communicate, but are not speech.

‘Free’ is also epistemically problematic here, as ‘free communication’ as such allows un-evidenced, irrational, anti-rationality statements. These can involve values which are incorrect from a rational viewpoint, e.g., statements promoting sexist or racist values. Free speech as such also allows false, un-evidenced allegations with anti-objectivity effects, e.g., a false allegation that person P is a molester of children. This could cause P such mental anguish, including due to subsequently being socially excluded/rejected, that P is unable to think as rationally as before the allegation.

Various points above suggest that freedom-as-such is rationally-unjustified in general, not just regarding communication. E.g., it was shown above that freedom to acquire simply *any* knowledge is not pro-rationality. The general rule concerning freedom is that it rationality-required that there needs to be freedom to be pro-rationality, e.g., acquire pro-rationality knowledge and be treated in non-racist ways, not just regarding communication, but in all areas.

The general communication rule here is that it is rationality-required to communicate only in pro-rationality ways or to make serious attempts to do so. This requires various moral, social, political and legal etc freedoms, rights and fulfilled duties.

(That general rule also accepts it is pro-rationality to allow the freedom to be or do anything a-rationality, including of course communicating anything a-rationality. To forbid that freedom would be to regard as wrong that which is from a rational viewpoint neither right nor wrong. That forbidding would involve incoherence, including with rationality. Allowing that freedom helps make life more meaningful, e.g., happy, simply due to having the freedom. This happiness would have an indirect pro-rationality effect.[[25]](#footnote-25))

In sum, recent and the following related comments imply that, instead of ‘free speech’, a term such as ‘rationally-unquestionable communication’ is the only rationally-unproblematic term.

Representative points concerning recent paragraphs, Questions A and B and (the) meaning in/of life:-

(i) There is a duty (responsibility) to promote, and a right to have, the freedom to seek evidence and have our evidence-based, rational, pro-rationality communications seriously considered by others. This helps make one’s life positively pro-rationality meaningful. Our statements here should not be ignored, ridiculed or censored if others disagree with our statements as such. We have a rationality-required right to be free from pressure to forgo that right. The confidence an individual may need to successfully resist such anti-rationality social, political etc pressure, and the promoting of that confidence, e.g., by pro-rationality education, are of epistemic value.

Sometimes one individual can know what is rationally-justified in an area, where all others are ignorant. Einstein and Copernicus are somewhat examples of the confident individualism and curiosity epistemically needed. However, individuals are naturally somewhat socially produced, e.g., the infant Einstein needed parents and others to keep him alive, help educate him and so on. The individual has pro-rationality social aspects and needs. There can be no completely isolated individual, e.g., completely neglected babies soon die. Yet some individuals can as adults become far ahead of their society regarding advancing knowledge which can be at least potentially pro-rationality. It is of major epistemic value for persons and institutions to co-operate societally to help produce individuals who can advance society’s pro-rationality knowledge.

(ii) Freedom to intentionally state non-evidence-based, irrational statements with anti-rationality effects, e.g., race-hate statements, is obviously ruled out by pro-rationality theory. However, occasionally irrationality can be pro-rationality, helping one live as one rationally-unquestionably should. This is not the so-called ‘rational irrationality’ discussed recently. Rather, it is ‘pro-rationality irrationality’, where irrationality is a means to the end ‘Be pro-rationality’. An example is Sally’s pro-rationality need to be irrational by lying. The lie saved children being murdered, thereby increasing the world’s long-term pro-rationality. Here Sally needed to be free to communicate irrationality as a means to more rationality. And certain jokes involving irrationality could be pro-rationality irrationality, e.g., via the humor increasing pro-rationality happiness and social bonds, or via making certain anti-rationality moral, social, political or legal etc claims laughable, hence more obviously incoherent, ridiculous and wrong. Satire can be useful here. Humor can make life more meaningful.

(iii) We have a rationality-required right to sometimes-unavoidably-fallible speculative hypothesising when seeking pro-rationality knowledge, i.e., to the imaginative freedom, diversity of ideas and creativity often needed to hypothesise here. With this, where we do not have a specific piece of pro-rationality knowledge to communicate, we have a right to communicate what we provisionally think is only possibly pro-rationality. Here pro-rational persons may make errors and in that sense be non-evidence-based or irrational, but this is not intentional. This is part of the trial-and-error process sometimes needed to acquire pro-rationality knowledge. Each error in that process gives us knowledge – knowledge of what not to do or think next time. This negative knowledge makes positive, pro-rationality knowledge more likely.

Because humans are fallible, all social, political, legal, educational, medical etc institutions have a responsibility to accept such hypothesising and errors.

And such institutions need to promote the pro-rationality-needed creative imagination. Before we have knowledge in some area, we obviously do not know what it is. Einstein said that to acquire new knowledge we need existing relevant knowledge plus imagination, with imagination being the more important. Something like Popper’s bold conjecturing is sometimes needed, so we can think of testable relevant hypotheses. So such creative imagination is an epistemic virtue. This involves mental flexibility or openness to new ideas. A directly-epistemic factor here involves promoting whatever helps develop the creative imagination, curiosity and open-mindedness needed to discover new knowledge. Early childhood education is important here. Such curiosity, creativity and imagination help make life meaningful.

Most importantly, openness to new ideas makes it more likely persons will be open to possible new values-theories, including a rationally-unquestionable one – rather than rationally-questionably clinging to one’s present somewhat incoherent theory. Such open-mindedness involves pro-rationality freedom of thought – an epistemic duty/right.

(iv) We have the rationality-required duty/right to rationally criticise any anti-rationality statement, any (anti-rationality) irrationality, and any possibly mistaken knowledge-claim, whether intentional or unintentional. Positive (including polite, peaceful, respectful) criticism here helps the social cohesion a coherent (pro-cohering) values-theory needs. It also helps remove errors as in (iii). One has a rationality-required duty to criticise oneself here. All involved in moral, social, political and legal etc decision-making need to know they are fallible, which requires balanced, moderate humility rather than intellectual arrogance, egoism or charismatic over-confidence. Here valuing and practising such humility and non-egoism is coherent with the fact of human fallibility. A type of sociable moderateness and peace goes with this coherence. All else equal, normal humans tend to find such sociability and peace meaningful as in preferable.

(v) Where there is evidence that there can be no evidence in an area, there is a rationality-required duty to believe nothing in the area. Here there is only meaninglessness, emptiness, a vacuum. And there is a duty to suspend belief where evidence is temporarily lacking or insufficient. There is a duty to communicate the reasons for that disbelief or suspension.

(vi) Social, political, educational and legal decision-makers have a duty to promote research in areas where there is temporarily insufficient evidence concerning an important pro-rationality issue. (Much past and present research (and development) was/is anti-rationality, including via wasting mental, material and financial etc resources which could have been used in pro-rationality ways.)

(vii) We have a rationality-required duty to be aware of emotional content in communications, e.g., words such as ‘hopefully’ and ‘unfortunately’, intended to influence persons in an anti-rationality direction, e.g., via disparaging a sex or race. Emotional tone of voice can have similar effects. Similarly for music and other arts. We need to be free from such influence. (Such influence has had many major anti-rationality effects in the past, e.g., as in Hitler’s speeches.)

(viii) Social, political and legal decision-makers have a rationality-required responsibility (duty) to ensure where possible the education of all regarding all those duties, freedoms and rights. E.g:- Each person needs to have free access to information (knowledge) the person needs in order to be individually-maximally pro-rationality. All need to have it communicated to them that it is rationality-required to know that all are fallible. And all need to know that if there is overwhelming evidence known by the vast majority, evidence that some individual is fallible, e.g., via disbelieving evolution and believing an anti-evolution religion, then the majority or collective has the right to (re‑)educate that individual (in the most pro-rationality way available).

(ix) Those 8 points imply a flexible balance is rationality-required between (a) individualism and (b) collectives or institutions such as the State, the law and a university. Of course the issue is not between individualism and collectivism as such. The rationality-relevant issue is whether the individual or the collective is more pro-rationality overall in the situation in question. Again, an overall need is for a collective which promotes pro-rationality individuality.

Those 9 points and similar would mean societal co-operation, positivity and peacefulness or lack of serious interpersonal conflict. Wherever they are rationality-required, they are epistemic virtues.

Next, further discussion of other epistemic values/virtues implied recently and previously. This involves discussing journalists, the media and other highly important groups needed for a society to be as rationally-justified as possible:-

Journalists need the epistemic virtue of being independent-minded. With this, their society needs to promote and protect their independence. Then they can pursue topics of pro-rationality importance free from pressures that many past and present journalists are/were affected by, e.g., from governments and media owners/editors with non-pro-rationality agendas. Such pressure would not exist in a rationally-unquestionable society.

With this, journalistic pro-rationality includes not exaggerating for sensationalist effects, and not understating or omitting issues to protect some person(s) or institutions(s) pressuring the journalists for such protection.

Audiences need what is most rationality-required. Information needs to be presented to achieve that. E.g., some audiences may be most receptive to ‘edutainment’, and some to satirical humor, rather than just be presented with the facts. Journalistic virtues include knowing what style of presentation is most pro-rationality in this or that situation.

Those and previously discussed epistemic virtues involve the virtue and duty ‘epistemic responsibility’. Journalists, and all able to do so, need to be responsible regarding being evidence-based and so on.

Rationally-unquestionable communication often requires emotions other than directly pro-rationality emotion. Indirectly pro-rationality emotions and related virtues here can include the courage often needed to state what is dangerous to state. E.g., journalists, lawyers and political protesters may be in danger when stating criticisms of an anti-rationality regime. Some persons need courage to state pro-rationality criticisms of themselves or valued others. Some need courage to investigate difficult, taboo or controversial issues where pro-rationality knowledge can be acquired. This includes investigating how one should live.

A directly-epistemic and moral virtue involved with many of the recently-discussed and other virtues is strength of character. E.g., it can take great strength of character, including endurance and fortitude, for a journalist to rationally-critically independently objectively investigate a corrupt fascist government where the journalist lives. It can also take great strength of character, and non-egoism, to admit one has been wrong, perhaps for all of one’s life so far, especially regarding one’s fundamental beliefs, e.g., concerning religion, politics and core values. Strength of character can help with the confidence involved with one viewing one’s life as meaningful.

With strength of character goes the virtue, resilience. Valuing and practising resilience is needed to deal with setbacks in one’s search for knowledge concerning what is rationally-unquestionably the correct way to do this or that. E.g, trial and error may keep producing errors for a considerable time. And resilience is needed to cope with anti-rationality problems which could discourage persons lacking that strength and related resilience. Such resilience is a directly-epistemic and a moral virtue.

Emotions involved in the humility often needed during pro-rationality communication are other examples of epistemic virtues. Here, say, journalists and (other) educators may need the virtue of humility required to not egoistically and not arrogantly promote a view one values greatly, and to be open to others’ views being possibly correct. This impartiality involves the emotions needed for fairness, interpersonal peace and such open-mindedness.

Highly important are the emotions involved in feeling it is one’s right and duty to be pro-rationality in those and all ways. Respecting duty here is parallel to Kant’s respect for the moral law.

Clearly, many values involved in above-mentioned moral, social, political, legal etc media/journalistic issues are also directly-epistemic values. These can involve general virtues. E.g., where moderate humility is a pro-rationality virtue, part of one’s character, one would tend to show moderate humility in social interactions as well as epistemically, and so on. Epistemic humility goes with being careful regarding evidence, and a general virtue here would mean one is also careful morally and socially regarding treatment of other persons, and so on. If one has courage as a general virtue, a part of one’s character, one would be courageous in ways recently mentioned, and in life generally, say in being courageous in moral areas such as Sally was in saving pro-rationality children from a murderer who may kill her.

The recently-mentioned epistemic virtues of pro-rationality humility, openness and fairness tend to involve the virtue generosity. This is needed to non-egoistically be impartial and helpfully kind regarding other persons’ unsuccessful and/or successful attempts at pro-rationality knowledge. This generosity can be general, e.g., in social areas regarding helping others, say a sick neighbour, not just in epistemic areas such as educating others to think in more pro-rationality ways. A type of moral, social etc benevolence is an indirectly-epistemic value. This involves a type of respect for others, one related to the respect and related peacefulness and egalitarianism involved in being non-sexist, non-racist and so on in life generally. Such respect, peacefulness and egalitarianism are indirectly-epistemic virtues.

The benevolence etc involving the normal human’s instinct to care for others, naturally rewarded by feeling pleased at having cared or helped, makes one’s life more meaningful, giving a point to one’s life. This can be pro-rationality, an aspect of how one should live.

Recent discussion involves the general issue of rights. E.g., there is obviously a rationally-unquestionable right to rationally-unquestionable, pro-rationality communication. The general issue here is that the only rationally-unquestionable, coherent rights are pro-rationality. This is suggested and exemplified throughout this paper. E.g., one such right requires being treated in non-sexist, non-racist ways. Another is the right to seek and use pro-rationality evidence. Negatively, a previous discussion argued there is no rationally-unquestionable right to free speech, e.g., as in ‘I have a right to my opinion, and to my faith’, where opinion, like faith, means there is no evidence. (The pro-rationality need (right) to deny that such alleged rights exist would be seen by many as paternalistic. The pro-rationality issue regarding all such opposition is not whether the opposition is paternalistic or not, but whether it is rationality-required. The general point here applies to all moral, social, political etc issues. E.g., regarding war, the pro-rationality issue is not whether war is, say, always ruled out by Christian or some other morality, but whether war in a particular situation is/was pro-rationality. E.g., a war against Nazism was rationality-required. Anti-Nazi soldiers were living as one should here, fighting for a rationally-unquestionably meaningful cause.)

Recent points also involve the general issue of freedom. Rationally-unquestionable freedom, negatively, is freedom from being affected by the anti-rationality. This includes being free from any motivation oneself has to be anti-rationality, e.g., sexist or racist. Positive rationally-unquestionable freedom is freedom to do whatever is pro-rationality in the situation one is in, e.g., a situation where evidence-based public statements would be pro-rationality. Being *free* to practise one’s values increases the positive meaningfulness of one’s life – and moreso if one knows one’s values are rationally-unquestionable.

Such virtues and freedoms involve something like Kant’s notion of respect for the moral law, i.e., for categorical imperatives. That notion involves Kant’s advocating the virtue of self-control needed to rule oneself via the moral law freely, via self-legislation (autonomously rather than be ruled by the heteronomous, e.g., priests or one’s egoistic desires). That ruling of oneself can be re-interpreted rationally-unquestionably – as ruling oneself in the right, rationally-unquestionable way, independently or free from anti-rationality emotional, moral, social, political etc pressures.

Some other directly- and indirectly-epistemic values/virtues:-

A set of interrelated directly-epistemic and moral, social etc values/practices is needed to optimise the sociability and co-operation needed to distribute resources and helpfulness so society can maximise its overall pro-rationality. This requires directly-epistemic virtues involved in knowing how to achieve such optimising and maximising as far as can be (approximately) known at the time. It also requires indirectly-epistemic moral, social, political etc practised values involved in the unselfish co-operation, peacefulness, caring and sharing needed for that distribution and helpfulness. Not practising those will mean not maximising pro-rationality in society overall. That maximisation, that sharing etc involve a pro-rationality version of ‘From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs’. Clearly, practising that requires certain types of social, political, legal, economic, health-care, educational etc institutions.

Those and various previous points relate to pro-rationality fairness. This involves the above-suggested notion that all such freedoms (and related rights) apply universally among persons. (Similarly for related responsibilities/duties wherever appropriate – e.g., not for infants.)

This fairness means considering all persons present and future. It requires types of world-wide, universal fairness. Here the recently-discussed general benevolence is needed. E.g., pro-rationality theory advocates a society/world without rich persons/nations paying for their children to have education or health-care that poor persons/nations cannot afford. This fairness and related sympathetic altruism (plus various other points) means a unique, new type of democratic socialism here. This would enable all to pro-rationality-flourish as far as possible consistent with maximising society’s overall pro-rationality. This peaceful world-society would involve all unselfishly sharing resources and caring for society’s members in ways meaning all can be as pro-rationality as is possible overall. Here, how one should (meaningfully) live involves helping all others to live as one or they should (be able/free to) live. This involves pro-rationality coherence among all. It is rational to have an overall view, including over all persons. If one knows oneself is treated fairly and is thereby helped to flourish, this gives more positive meaning to one’s life.

Relatedly, it is rationality-required that all of society’s aspects need to avoid incoherence. E.g., it is rationality-required that there be no economy incoherent with other social, political and legal institutions. Political/legal decision-makers need to ensure that. Coherence requires avoiding anything analogous to the incoherence between the equality (one person one vote) common in Western liberal democracies and the vast inequality and at least potential conflict among persons there economically. It is pro-rationality fairness to ensure all have the resources they need to be maximally-individually pro-rationality (consistent with maximising society’s overall pro-rationality). Relatedly, because the rational applies universally and concerns the possible, it is not possible for all (or anyone) to be both poor and rich – but it is possible to universally apply a principle such as ‘To each according to their pro-rationality needs, from each according to their pro-rationality ability’. This is rationality-required economic fairness, an egalitarianism qualified via certain needs and abilities. Rationally-unquestionable economic decision-making would ensure that. This would mean pro-rationality societal peace, via a lack of socio-economic class conflict or at least envy, snobbery and so on.

Importantly, rationality’s overall view includes viewing economics in a long-term environmental context. Economic growth as such is rationally-questionable. Only goods and services which are pro-rationality-needed are rationally-unquestionable. Many present goods and services are not needed, including because they waste needed resources including the time, materials, energy and human effort used to make them. Such resources could be used for pro-rationality education, health-care and so on.[[26]](#footnote-26) Regarding Question A, one’s way of life should include avoiding such waste – hence avoiding selfish accumulation of material wealth/goods as such.

Suh waste and accumulation is unfair long-term. It makes it harder for future generations to live in a pro-rationality-promoting, sustainable environment. With this, the climate and the rest of human-affectable nature needs considering, including non-human animals.[[27]](#footnote-27) The fully rational view is an overall view, including a long-term view.

Again, there are rights and related responsibilities involved in all practicable factors here, and everywhere. E.g., all have a rationally-unquestionable right to be treated in rationally-unquestionable, pro-rationality-fair ways, and the responsibility to treat others thus wherever possible.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Further regarding persons, society and fairness:- It is rational (correct) or knowledge that individual and other situational differences exist. So, e.g., the rational, pro-rationality-fair view here recognises that for some persons pro-rationality practices often need to be largely non-intellectual. E.g., that view accepts that some persons cannot manage anything more difficult than cleaning parks and streets – and this unavoidability means they cannot rationally be viewed as responsible for their capacities and as morally faulty/inferior. Such views are unfair. Anyway, clean parks and streets are needed for everyone’s pro-rationality health, safety and aesthetic experiences. Not every person needs to become a pro-rationality engineer, philosopher, scientist or similar. Yet every person can be as individually as pro-rationality as is possible overall, sometimes including via cleaning parks and so on. This would make each person’s life as rationally-unquestionably meaningful as possible.

Moral, social, political and legal decision-making needs to involve various previous points wherever possible:-

Informed (knowledgeable) consent is important here. This includes decisions concerning consent to sexual acts. Uninformed consent is unfair, involving exploitation – except in certain rare cases.[[29]](#footnote-29) Pro-rationality consent here requires all involved to be informed (educated) with the relevant pro-rationality knowledge. Schools need to be involved. Lack of pro-rationality-needed knowledge is anti-rationality.

Consent to one’s political and legal institutions is of overarching importance. One is normally born into a society with those institutions, and non-consent here is analogous to inherently non-consensual rape. Rationally-unquestionable, informed consent is consent only to the pro-rationality, including pro-rationality political and legal institutions. The common tacit, habitual or ignorant consent to political and legal institutions in the past and now is not rationally-justifiable. It is at least somewhat based on a type of ‘false consciousness’.

However, in a pro-rationality society not all persons, e.g., the young, would be adequately informed to give rationally-unquestionable consent to political and legal institutions. The only realistic, possible solution here is potential consent, i.e., involving what an uninformed person would consent to if adequately pro-rationality-informed. Similarly regarding some medical and other consent issues.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Recent paragraphs imply a unique social contract, one as rationally-justifiable as possible.

Political and legal decision-making in directly pro-rationality areas, i.e., not a-rationality areas, needs to be via whoever has the most pro-rationality knowledge in the area. Evidence-based decisions are needed as far as possible. This coheres with the widely-accepted rational view that, e.g., after informed patients agree with doctors that surgery is needed, surgical procedural decisions need to crucially involve the most expert surgeon(s) available. They are best not made, e.g., via a vote among all hospital staff, including cleaners, accountants etc. (Their views would probably be rationally meaningless, i.e., uninformed.) Similarly regarding car mechanical-safety repair decisions. And so on. Expert knowledge is widely agreed to be necessary, and it is rational (true) that it is necessary regarding needed knowledge. Coherence here means there also needs to be expertise regarding political and legal decisions.

However, there is an unavoidable at least potential problem with evidence-based and hence rational, knowledge-based decision-making. Expertise may only be apparent, or merely a claim. Evidence/knowledge here shows humans are often fallible. So pro-rationality decision-making needs rationally-informed debate among various persons, plus any criticism and research needed to avoid errors as far as possible. This may require imaginative hypothesising, trial-and-error and suspended judgement – while temporarily acting on the apparently best evidence, where action is needed. Errors here and elsewhere may sometimes be the only way to gain knowledge. This may be only negative knowledge, namely finding out what not to do, leaving less possibly correct alternatives till positive knowledge is discovered. Again, this can be the most rational way to acquire pro-rationality knowledge.

In sum, in pro-rationality politics there would be no prime minister, president, dictator or similar making all the decisions. Decision-making would be spread as rationality-required, namely widely across society’s members wherever appropriate. Tests would be needed to provide evidence regarding who has the most pro-rationality knowledge in a certain area, and only those persons should make decisions, in self-critical groups. Persons who pass the test in one area will not pass in all areas. So that spread is the most rational, i.e., knowledge-based way to make decisions where there is a right answer. This is the most democratic (participatory-democratic) decision-making possible consistent with the rationally-unquestionable.[[31]](#footnote-31) The fully rational issue here is not whether X is democratic or not, but whether X is the most pro-rationality available alternative.

Recent points involve much that is needed to be protected by law. The only laws as rationally-justifiable as possible are pro-rationality. This would make laws rationally-unquestionably *de jure* instead of *de facto*. From a fully rational view, all laws so far have been merely *de facto*. Many pro-rationality laws are implied above. They need to protect and promote various rights and responsibilities discussed above.

As implied often above, pro-rationality laws would be evidence-based as far as possible. This would not only be via courts focusing on evidence for/against some person’s guilt/innocence regarding a crime. Also, regarding humanity generally, as far as possible and wherever appropriate, e.g., concerning the economy and the human-affectable environment, there would be rationally-unquestionable, evidence-based law, not just laws.

Enough has been said to hopefully adequately deal with Questions A and B and (the) meaning in/of life etc issues, without making the paper far too long. There have been enough representative examples and discussions of interrelated directly-epistemic and moral, social, political, legal and other rights and related responsibilities, and values/factors. There are many more examples and discussion in other papers.[[32]](#footnote-32) That applies to issues concerning a-rationality, including this being an area where the total freedom and hence inconsistent choices (and all other issues here) are not inconsistent with pro-rationality. In a-rationality areas there are inherently no right or wrong answers or choices. Pro-rationality persons would know that and hence be interpersonally peaceful: there is no pro-rationality reason for practical or real conflict here. Here choices are rationality-permissible rather than rationality-required. The a-rationality is neither rationally-justified nor rationally-unjustified. Decision-making in a-rationality areas needs to be via whoever is concerned with the decision. This can require a different type of democracy from that recently advocated. Discussion of the a-rationality would make this paper far too long, and the discussion of it is easily accessible elsewhere.[[33]](#footnote-33)

**Section 4: Concluding Comments**

(Sections 1’s and 2’s concluding comments are relevant here.)

This paper’s fundamental issues concern Socrates’s question (Question A), ‘How should one live?’, and his comment that ‘An unexamined life is not worth living’, plus the related fundamental epistemic question (Question B), ‘How can one know (rationally-examine) how one should live?’. Questions A and B have been arguably sufficiently answered – via examining what it would mean to live in rationally-unquestionable or rationality-required ways, and via examining how we can know that as far as possible. Those questions and that rational examination apply to related issues concerning (the) meaning in/of life. All those questions etc can only be dealt with correctly via rationality, and hence via a rationally-unquestionable values-theory.

Rationality-required factors imply a universally-applicable values-theory with one general obligatory end and many sub-values thereunder. This theory is fundamentally epistemic. And it is consequentialist, with various interrelated directly-epistemic and moral, social, political, legal and other factors including rights, responsibilities, virtues or practices needed to achieve the rationality-required consequences.

If a factor is required by rationality, and hence valuable regarding rationality’s very existence, then rationality cannot self-coherently question whether the factor is required or valuable here. Rationality is inherently coherent. So a prescribable factor and its being valuable here, plus the associated value prescribing the factor, are rationally-unquestionable. Only the anti-rationality or irrational can (incorrectly) question the factor, its being valuable here, and the value prescribing it. Practised values here are rationality-required, pro-rationality factors.

(Similar comments apply regarding pro-rationality factors which help existing rationality increase or develop.)

Without rationality, and hence pro-rationality factors, humans could not reliably survive. Pro-rationality factors/values were also shown to concern everything else normal humans find naturally important and deeply meaningful, e.g., love, pleasure, various other emotions, fairness, and raising happy, healthy children – and truth or knowledge. (Various qualifications are needed here of course.)

For such and other pro-rationality reasons the education crucial regarding developing a rationally-unquestionable, rationally-examined life, is highly practicable, including via being naturally highly motivating. A dull, narrow or cerebral education and life is not pro-rationality-optimal. It would lack meaning sufficient for the life to be optimally pro-rationality. Passionate emotional engagement, much freedom, enjoyment, dedication, flourishing, diversity and creativity are often needed. And in a-rationality areas total freedom is appropriate, adding indirectly to the liberty and happiness involved in being pro-rationality. The combination of all directly-epistemic and indirectly-epistemic factors, including rights, responsibilities, virtues or practices means a unique meaningfulness – a type of human flourishing, one far from dull, narrow and cerebral.

Various pro-rationality values, e.g., non-sexism and non-racism, were shown to be necessary for or functional aspects of scientific (and all other) rationality. This, plus other points in Sections 1-3, provides sufficient evidence for pro-rationality values-theory being uniquely rationally-unquestionable. Such points were shown to be the only possible evidence, the only available evidence, for a values-theory. This paper shows that all values-theories except pro-rationality theory are at least somewhat internally-incoherent and incoherent with rationality, hence not rationally-justifiable. So they cannot be rationally viewed as correct. General values in some other theories, e.g., holistic flourishing, non-racism and non-sexism, come under ‘Be pro-rationality’, but those other theories lack the evidence pro-rationality theory has for its sub-values.

Pro-rationality values-theory inherently includes prescribing a rationally-critical approach. This has implications for all persons, and includes the theory requiring its advocates to be self-critical, rationally viewing their human-suggested specifics as often fallible or unavoidably approximate. Yet via increasing knowledge here we can increasingly have a theory on-average clear enough to be a practicable work-in-progress regarding answering Socrates’s ‘How should one live?’.

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1. “Reason is …the slave of the passions” (Hume, D. “*Treatise*” III, 1.1) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. # Couvalis, G (2012) gives good explanations of much of what this paper means by rationality and knowledge.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. And see, e.g., <https://parentingscience.com/what-babies-know-about-numbers/> and <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2008/02/infants-are-able-to-recognize-quantity/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This is similar to any inborn generative grammar such as the one proposed by Noam Chomsky. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Such foundational (fundamental) laws of thought and coherent perception must be at least part of a foundation for knowledge – a formal ‘X is (not-not) X’ part, and a related coherent-perception part. When babies are surprised by an often-repeated single X seeming to become 2X, they know or perceive there is *incoherence* among what they see. So, requiring coherence among perceptions seems innate – a rationality-requirement, one evolved via being necessary for human survival. E.g., to survive we must know food is food, and that rocks, air, poison etc are what they are and not food.

   Beyond knowledge’s foundations, all other knowledge must of course be coherent or at least consistent with and hence non-incoherent with the foundations. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. E.g., ‘1+2=3’ and ‘Cows are mammals’ are pieces of knowledge which are mutually consistent in that they do not contradict, but there is considerable doubt regarding their being mutually coherent via supporting each other or working positively together. Regarding the purposes of this paper, such issues can be ignored. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Reported in apa.org/monitor (2014/06). Further analysis is in

   [Wolfe and Hildyard, (2002), and Nelson and Zeanah (2014)](https://www.livescience.com › Health )  [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [Harlow, Harry (June 1959](https://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/archive/HarlowLIM.htm)). Those infants normally preferred a cuddly non-food-providing mother-substitute to a non-cuddly food-providing mother-substitute. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Here ‘potentially’ refers to the fact that, e.g., Nazi parents were sufficiently affectionate to their children for the children to grow up to live as Nazis, which is anti-rational. This is discussed later. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See the previous footnote. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This is qualified below, e.g., in discussing lying to avoid murder. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Farrand (2016) discusses a-rationality in depth. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The other work is Farrand (2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Farrand (2016) discusses a-rationality in depth. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. This does not mean one’s life’s meaningfulness is rationally-unquestionable. E.g., Hitler’s life and its meaning for him were highly anti-rationality, e.g., he had millions of potentially and actually at least significantly pro-rationality persons murdered. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Farrand (2016) discusses a-rationality in depth. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. A *pro*-rationality mind can choose to be irrational, i.e., where this is pro-rationality, as with Sally lying. This is not rationality choosing to be irrational or wrong. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. This ‘potentially’ is discussed shortly. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ‘Be pro-rationality’ implies being free to do or be anything a-rationality, the irrelevant-to-rationality. So ‘Be pro-rationality’ covers a-rationality. Farrand (2016) discusses this. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. E.g., suppose violence is a necessary means to valued end E, a means one considers unjustified and refuses to implement. Here one values non-violence as an end and views it as of more value than end E, and hence as a higher priority than E. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Farrand (2016) discusses a-rationality in depth. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For a much more detailed discussion see Farrand (2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Human nature seems to motivate us to treat members of our perceived in-group better than perceived outsiders. This does not cohere with the universal applicability of a rational theory’s overall view. Any such human tendencies need to be overruled. Farrand (2016) discusses issues here. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Gaudry and Spielberger (1971) present research suggesting a moderate degree is educationally best. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. This indirect effect is discussed in Farrand (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Farrand (2016) discusses such and other economic issues in detail. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Farrand (2016) discusses such issues in detail. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. E.g., it is not possible for infants to treat others thus, due to infants’ ignorance and inability here. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. E.g., conceivably an apparently permanently comatosed man would, if able to, consent to his loving and loved wife arranging for his sperm to be acquired so as to help produce the children they both wanted before he became comatosed. She may need to perform what some describe as rape. This could be pro-rationality. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See the previous footnote. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Much of Farrand (2016), e.g., Sections 29-36, discusses such and other political issues in detail. E.g., in a-rationality areas democratic decisions would concern all involved, partly because there is no right or wrong answer. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The links below lead to PhilArchive sites via which the relevant 2 papers, by Kym Farrand, can be easily downloaded via the titles below, respectively, for the title ‘[Rationally-Unquestionable Education, Values and Knowledge](https://philarchive.org/go.pl?id=FARREV&proxyId=&u=https%3A%2F%2Fphilpapers.org%2Farchive%2FFARREV.docx)’ use <https://philarchive.org/rec/FARREV> and, for ‘[Rationality-Required Values: Reinterpreting Kant, Rawls, Aristotle, Mill and Others](https://philarchive.org/go.pl?id=FARRVR-2&proxyId=&u=https%3A%2F%2Fphilpapers.org%2Farchive%2FFARRVR-2.docx)’ use <https://philarchive.org/versions/FARRVR-2> [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See the previous footnote. Those papers discuss a-rationality far more than this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)