



The Schwartz (1992) system of values

## An Evolutionary Theory of Universal Values (Griffiths, et al.)

A soon to be published theoretical paper

A radical multidisciplinary paper that traces the evolution of our personalities from the very beginnings of the universe. Underpinned by fundamental physical science – particularly the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics – and Darwin’s theory of natural selection, it draws upon insights from game theory and complexity theory to show how all systems in the universe – our brains included – evolve such that they can be understood in terms of their propensity to change and their mode of change (cooperation to competition) – the dimensions of the Schwartz system of values.

It argues that, while the universe as a whole evolves such that one may infer equivalents to all human values (i.e. motivational mechanisms that instigate and moderate the mode of all change), all stable non-living ‘local’ systems, from atoms upwards, operate as if only motivated by the equivalent of conservative/cooperative values (i.e. those that facilitate the co-operation of their components to maintain their form). Competition exists between systems but cannot be tolerated internally as this causes a destabilizing loss of energy. Likewise, for them, change and evolution can only be facilitated externally by the interaction of systems driven by universal forces (gravity and electromagnetism). Only with the evolution of ‘living’ complex adaptive systems did local systems gain the ability to harness, internalise and maintain competitively motivated mechanisms to maintain a dynamic form of stability. These opened up the potential to internally instigate change, and led to the development of equivalents to the values (and eventually the values themselves) on the openness to change half of the Schwartz system of values.

This theory shows our values to be the most important part of our personalities. They and their pre-existing equivalents are literally what make us tick. Not only this, but they also make everything else tick! This makes it possible for us to not only use them to better understand and develop ourselves, but to better understand and develop the systems of which we are part: teams, organisations, societies, and our shared environment.

Since Neil first developed the theory set out in this paper many findings have emerged consistent with its theoretical expectations. Values have been found to be heritable, and not just the cultural adaptations they were previously thought to be. Griffiths et al's (2021) published findings on the values of only-children show that it is values more than Big Five traits that give rise to popular beliefs concerning personality, and support the contention that values give rise to different traits in different environments. Finally, the decision-making biases research that is currently being prepared for publication shows that values affect decision-making in ways that are consistent with their having evolved sequentially to form a hierarchy sympathetic to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Neil is currently seeking to find an established publisher for a book entitled 'Deep Values' that sets out the theory and its implications for us (personally and globally) in a form that is easily understood and relatable without 'talking down' to those who are not well versed in science generally and psychology in particular.