

THE DISTORTION OF VALUE: THE ECONOMY AND ETHICAL REDUCTIONISM

Michael George

Religious Studies Department, St. Thomas University,
Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada
mgeorge@stu.ca

Received: 28 May 2018

While the economy plays a necessary role in the function and maintenance of social value, and the delivery of vital goods, contemporary society suffers systematic distortion inasmuch as monetary value has become the default, or normative, standard for all aspects of human existence. This reduction of value seriously affects the possibilities of all human development, inasmuch as those projects that promote growth and development are evaluated primarily in terms of economic potential. Further, the dysfunctional understandings of economies continue to support political and social ideologies that encourage economic benefits at the expense of human lives. The lack of a historical perspective that this reductive perspective creates negatively affects the abilities of people to recognize necessary and constitutional values that would enable all persons to make deliberate and meaningful choices with their lives, choices that are required if society is interested in promoting cultural and transcendent values, precisely those choices which make meaning the focus of human endeavour.

Key words: *reduction of value, economy, education, epistemological positions, critical realism*

A human being is a complex and fragile entity. The social orders within which human beings are nurtured, protected, and given help to develop are likewise complex, not the least because these orders consist of large numbers of human beings, acting in concert to achieve and maintain goods and services, that meet the needs of every individual human being. The cultural projects and perspectives that shape and inform the social orders are also complex; the cumulative experiences

and learnings that result in symbolic, institutional, political, religious and philosophical frameworks provide orientations and directions that shape our identities, provide us with access to meaning, and articulate the values within which we attempt to develop and grow. While the individual, the social, and the cultural are all distinct patterns of human process, they are characterized by high degrees of complexity, where individuals' personal capacities are developed within social patterns that themselves are ordered by cultural demands. All of this indicates increasing numbers of relevant and significant variables that must be considered, where a greater comprehensiveness and scope that is indicative of a healthy society can be identified, where growth and development are normative, and systematic decline is identified as such, and resolved, before it can threaten the well being of the entire social reality. In such a society, an economy, and all of its myriad elements and relations, would provide a regular and sustainable set of sets of relationships that would lead to the production and distribution of all vital, social and necessary goods to all the members of that society. As a foundational part of a healthy society, the economy consists of those sets of sets of relationships within the social order that in a sustainable fashion cumulatively serves the needs of the individual members of the society, and is shaped and influenced by cultural perspectives where meaning and value are identified as serving the needs of individuals, the social order, and the cumulative historical project that is the result of all of these levels of meaning, resulting in a culture that is normatively oriented towards promoting values that actually enhance the lives of all of its members.¹

In point of fact, this sort of economy does not exist on our planet, nor has it ever existed. However, given that economies are the result of the combined efforts of human beings to produce and deliver goods, it does not seem reasonable to ascribe divine power and/or intervention² in this process as definitive or foundational, except as a means of obfuscating what is actually going on. In examining the actual activities

¹ Those interested in such an apparently utopian notion of what an economy might be, in a precise and tangible manner, might profitably examine the books by Bernard Lonergan (1998; 1999). These books are a scientific examination of what an economy is, what it consists of, and how it actually functions. Not surprisingly, economists are not interested in them. For those looking for more context, and an introduction to these texts, the books by Philip McShane may be of interest (McShane, 1996; 2000; 2002; 2010; 2014; 2016; 2017).

² Invisible hand(s)?

that increasingly make up the modern economy, particularly in North America and to some extent in Europe, it becomes apparent that what passes for mainstream economic process has less to do with the actual production of goods and services, and more to do with the management of money, where money lent at interest is recycled at rates that increase exponentially (Lawrence, 2017).³ However, the focus of this paper is on the social implications of the reduction of actual values (goods, living wages, social benefits, and the like), to the sole focus of monetary gain and accumulation, and how this reduction has negatively affected the basic social foundations that constitute the social order, rather than an explication of the reasons, means, and general chicanery that has transformed the economic process into the exploitative system that we have today. Those interested in the latter might profitably consult the texts listed in the previous footnotes.

A functional and differentiated understanding of the nature of values can help to situate the discussion of how ethical reductionism is detrimental to every aspect of human life, and how this continual reliance on a distorted understanding of financial greed restricts and undermines such value frameworks, as well as what is left of the social projects that used to provide the means and support for persons to build better lives for themselves and their families and loved ones. Beginning with the premise that actual value is concrete, that is capable of being recognized and achieved, the critical realist perspective understands the desire for value as constitutive and foundational for the human person, and for all persons acting in concert to realize mutual goods and benefits (Lonergan, 1972; 1994).⁴ Fundamentally, then, all actions intend the realization of some benefit, good, or goal, as human persons are naturally inclined to improve their basic condition and situation as a rule. Three distinct ends or goals are distinguished: particular goods, the good of order (which allows for the regular occurrence of particular goods), and terminal values, which are the values that are chosen by authentic persons, who are instances of originating value themselves

³ See pp. 75–85 for finances and profits that have nothing to do with production. The article is an excellent example of how economies have moved from a concern with actual value to a singular focus on profit.

⁴ The Chapter Two starts with the sentence “What is good, always is concrete”. The relevance of this perspective becomes apparent when the normative dimension of transcendence and the pursuit of higher order values (cultural, religious, metaphysical), is considered.

(Loneragan, 1972, 47–51). Central to the discussion here is the good of order, the sets of sets of recurring patterns and relationships that constitute a functional social order that meets the needs and demands of its members more or less adequately, depending on the terminal or chosen values that characterize the general orientation of the society as a whole. The economic processes and relationships are part of the good of order, and are characterized by actions that are informed by cooperation in order to maintain the regular availability of particular goods, and the interdependence and mutually informed decisions that ensure that all of the necessary operations are carried out in a recurrent manner (Loneragan, 1972, 49). It should be kept in mind that the operations proper to the good of order, necessary for the maintenance and regulation of the society, are not governed by independently generated values, but rather are oriented in terms of those overarching values which inform the general ethos of the society, those values which are chosen that promote the well being and development of all the members of the society. Inasmuch as a singular focus on monetary gain as an end in itself, to the exclusion of all other values, comes to define the basic nature of a society, those overarching values that symbolize the highest aspirations of the culture disappear, or get distorted into gross caricatures of themselves. What has happened is that a middle order value, albeit one fundamental to the adequate functioning of the society, has become an ultimate value, perhaps becoming the only value which is recognized, and identified as such, and in so doing has destroyed the natural integrity, order, and function of those range of values that normatively direct human activity and development towards general improvement and development that is the proper end of human aspiration.

The sort of distortion caused by the singular focus on monetary gain and accumulation is not incidental or inconsequential. The effects are ubiquitous, destructive, and systematically cumulative. The easiest and most straightforward way to recognize this social and cultural degeneration is to examine the rationales that increasingly inform the operations of those significant social institutions most responsible for the creation and maintenance of the possibility of the general well being of the society's members. The political sphere is increasingly marred by recurring instances of corruption, both individual and general, where the elected representatives serve the interests of the dominant economic forces, and their own twisted ends, and the legitimate needs of the elec-

toral bodies are ignored, ridiculed, or minimalized. The most regular response given to those outraged or conscientious enough to demand some accountability from their representatives are that the needs and requirements of the larger financial and corporate entities are paramount, given the oft repeated cliché that what benefits the corporate entities benefits the general populace, as the general well being supposedly depends on the well being of the corporations, for the economy and the corporate interests are assumed to be synonymous terms. It is interesting to notice how little accountability corporations ever assume for the consequences of their fiscal and “productive” activities. It is now generally recognized that the only negative drawback to participating in building corporate (and personal) profits is getting caught for doing something illegal, and the personal consequences of being charged with so-called “white collar” crime are much less than the range of criminal penalties brought against those in the lower economic orders. In point of fact, it is not an incidental feature of our current social order that the building, maintenance and provisioning of prisons is now considered a “growth industry”. In addition, the fact that the corporate entities demand and rely on financial incentives, paid for by taxpayers, to increase the scale of their operations, and the resulting growth in profit margins, indicates the extent to which our elected government representatives serve different masters than the people who trusted them to enough to make the decisions that are supposed to be made in the best interests of the electorate.

The medical profession, and the institutions that provide the frameworks for the services and treatments offered are also increasingly informed and defined by financial considerations above and beyond the general expectations that the physical and mental well-being of the general populace is the primary value to be maintained and met by administrators, professionals, and support staff. The exodus of medical professionals, especially doctors, to countries and territories where greater financial rewards can be gained, often with less effort than in the country of origin, continues to demonstrate how the benefits of global economies are unevenly distributed across the planet. To the extent that the only recognizable value is that of monetary opportunity or gain, there is not much of a convincing counter-argument that the general good of basic populations should take priority in determining medical and government policies, expenditures, and the general allocation of resources. As well, it is now commonly known that major pharma-

ceutical and medical companies reserve the right to charge exorbitant prices for new (and high demand) drugs and technology in order to keep their profits suitably high, and to offset the costs incurred in the original design, testing, and implementation of the various medications and technologies. It is now a relative commonplace that those individuals with higher incomes have the option of receiving premium care and cutting edge medical resources whenever needed, while those dependent on publically funded medical resources often have extremely long waiting periods, even for treatments and resources which are needed immediately due to life threatening diseases and conditions. So-called “two tier” models of health care are certain to continue to undermine the capacities and capabilities of publically funded medical care to meet the health requirements and demands of those without the ability to pay for instant relief from their suffering and ailments.

It is in the sphere of education that the social implications of a singular ethical focus on financial value have (perhaps) the most damning long-term negative effects. For ethicists and philosophers, the basic and general incompetence of our professions to challenge and offset this cultural decline is clearly observed in the lack of influence and power to formulate institutional and policy measures that might reverse this ethical and cultural decline. Those disciplines that are clearly beneficial to the advancement of corporate interests are obviously preferred and generously funded by the governing bodies of most educational institutions. These biases are embodied and replicated in the formation and training of students and instructors, and the singular criterion of success is that denoted by financial awards and the influence and power that come with it. One of the more serious side effects of this general process is the generic reliance on an instrumental perspective which ensures that the larger and more comprehensive bodies of evidence and concern that might give rise to critical questions of value are rarely, if ever, noticed or acknowledged. In educational districts and regions with less financial resources, it is a common practice to divest the school curriculum of those “incidental” or “extra-curricular” subjects, such as music and art, drama and languages, precisely those areas that would expose students to the aspects of culture which embody and give expression to the higher and more comprehensive aspirations of human endeavors where meaning, purpose and the creation of identity would serve to focus and develop skill sets within which critical sensibilities might be cultivated.

In order to address some of the more problematic aspects of the distortion of value within education and educational process, some methodological considerations may help in identifying the different levels of engagement and where and how the distortion of value might be identified and rectified. While necessarily brief, such considerations should include such general categories as the purpose and function of education, the underlying philosophy of education which supports the former, an adequate epistemology that is empirically and critically grounded, and most significantly an adequate account of the human person who is the focus of the entire endeavor. For those engaged in education, an initial concern should be the underdeveloped and tentative nature of the fundamental (mis)understandings that underpin our current attempts to educate, and the widespread lack of coherence and continuity that reveal the actual state of our ignorance of what a human being actually is, and requires, in order to develop in an ethically normative fashion. An example of this sort of ignorance is provided by some of the very interesting work going on in terms of understanding how the human brain actually functions, and what the brain is capable of. The larger point is that we do not actually yet know what the brain does, how it functions, what its capacities are, and so on, yet we continue to educate as if we have an adequate grasp of what a student requires and is capable of learning and our own proper role in that context. Clearly, there are conflicting agendas and interests in the project of education, and we ignore this fact at our peril. Some fundamental bases for appreciating what is at stake in education might allow a greater degree of critical reflection on what is constructive and provides for the development of persons, and what does not.

First then, the purpose and function of education should be to provide contexts and aid to students to enable them to become able to develop the necessary levels of skills and abilities to adequately understand themselves, their communities, and their world, in order that they might then have the real possibility of making informed and critical choices about what kind of person they want to become, and how to go about doing it in a positive and constructive fashion, without being unduly coerced or influenced by those interest groups who have ulterior motives which do not prioritize the normative dimensions of inquiry, understanding, judging, and decision making which constitute the student as a fully functional human being. Any understanding of education that does not include and prioritize these basic conditions is not, strictly

speaking, education. That is, it is not correct to equate education with job training, which is a different type of project, with different intended outcomes. Education is, and should be, a more fundamental concern and focus of any society that is interested in the general well being and future possibilities of its members, where the choice and priority of values is within the scope and ability of most people in the society to critically assess and determine. In this regard, the singular focus on one's role in the economic framework that characterizes much of our current educational focus is a recipe for social and cultural degeneration and suicide. It is within the dimensions of culture that each particular community and people choose those values and criteria which will inform the meaning and significance of all activities that shape and form the community as such. It is within such communities that the opportunity for members to become individuals, with all the attendant rights and privileges of such, are either promoted and sustained, or not. People are primarily social beings, and individual prerogatives that exist in any widespread fashion attest to the ethical character and stability of the larger social group of which they are members, or in the negative sense, they do not. Any adequate form of education promotes the former, and struggles to avoid the latter. This requires an appreciation of the nature and significance of values, and their high priority in the creation and maintenance of any adequately functional society.

There is a double-sided dimension to all education, and the image of scissors is used to illustrate the basic features of the dual process. There is an upper blade, the blade that represents culture, history, and the cumulative achievements of the particular society, and a lower blade, that represents the fundamental normative dimensions of the developing human being, where increased mastery of skills and cognitional process represent the normative dimension of growth and progress.⁵ This image also provides insights into how the specific historicity of particular communities is paired with the normative dynamism towards development that characterizes all people with the basic capacities. An adequately functional educational process must necessarily include these distinctions, and highlight the significance of the historical dimension, both as situated within, and as an orientation towards, as this is fundamentally important in being able to understand the features and

⁵ The image can be used to demonstrate the education process within particular disciplines, as well. For example, see Lonergan, 1993, 251.

meaning attributed to one's own social order. This is required so that all significant decision making likewise includes the awareness that there are larger, and long term, implications that inhere to all human actions and choices. Such a position is critical to the project of recognizing, assessing, and acting on the basis of shared social and cultural values. Any philosophy of education which neglects such considerations is short changing its society, and its students.

The issue of identifying an adequate epistemology that would encourage and support such an approach to education is too complex to be attempted in this current paper, but certain features of the model can be highlighted and emphasized, inasmuch as misguided epistemological positions are responsible for much that is problematic in education, not the least of which can be easily discerned in philosophy.⁶ The first point, and the most important, is that any coherent and consistent epistemology is based on the invariant cognitional operations and processes of persons that lead from inquiry to understanding, and from there to decision and action. The normative dimension in any epistemology is the (relative) ability of the person(s) engaged in the process. (Very) briefly, the levels of cognitional operations consist of experience (from which our questions arise), understanding (where we attempt to make sense of what we are investigating), judgment (where we assess the adequacy of our answers), and decision making (where we act on the basis of our new understanding). While very few philosophers unfamiliar with this epistemological approach, generally characterized as a form of critical realism, are likely to accept it at face value, it remains the case that in order to attempt to refute it, the basic operations must all be utilized in the process of attempting to disprove the basic contentions.⁷ The primary implication for any adequate epistemology in relation to the project of education is that there is a sufficient and ascertainable understanding about the nature of truth, which incorporates all the basic features of cognitional process and the full range of discoveries about the fundamental nature of reality. In contradistinction to the classical notion of truth, of which the fundamental feature is its constancy, both in its nature and its attributes, any functional understanding of truth has to incorporate the reality of the historical situatedness of human beings,

⁶ The most complete account of the problem and resolution of the epistemological issue is found in Lonergan, 1992.

⁷ For a condensed account of such a generic attempt, see Lonergan, 1972, 18–19.

and the discoveries of modern science, most notably that probability is a prominent feature of truth in many aspects of reality. The resulting implications are that truth is possible, that it can be ascertained (by those with sufficient mastery and understanding), and that it is contingent, due to the historical and finite nature of human beings' experience and understanding. Given these conditions, relativism and reductionism would soon lose their many adherents, and the project of value would become potentially normative, always assuming that comprehensiveness and coherence is normatively present in the attempt to understand and act in a coherent fashion.

The last feature of this brief discussion of education and educational process is the belated and incomplete understanding of what a human being is. Countless examples of reductive and bastardized versions of what persons are and their general significance can be viewed and experienced by searching social media, viewing popular entertainment through movies or television shows, following the news media in its various forms, or by working in or utilizing the proffered services of various institutional and corporate entities. That is, our experiences of what it is to be human are often distorted, convoluted, or reductive. As noted earlier in the text, current research on human neurological functions and capacities are only beginning to become part of our own self-understanding. Fundamental and basic features of human life, such as living in a healthy manner, are defined primarily by adverting to the absence of any illness, or physical and mental incapacity. That is, health is defined and understood primarily in negative terms. There is no normative understanding or definition of what a healthy human being is, or how such a person would function as a healthy being, except in the absence of illness or incapacity. Even such basic features as sexual identity have no normative understandings or definitions to provide positive and constructive guidance. What is a healthy sexual being? How does such a person understand oneself, in any normative fashion? Our culture is remarkable for its lack of basic and normative orientations in some of the most foundational aspects of being human. Such obvious lacunae indicate that our level of self-understanding and appreciation has not been subject to any extensive or comprehensive attempts to recognize our fundamental natures, or our possibilities, to grow and relate to others in a normative fashion. These discrepancies also indicate some serious flaws in our approach to education. Quite apart from not understanding or valuing a positive portrayal of what a healthy person

is, or what a healthy sexual person is, in education we find widespread evidence that the normative process of young human beings is to ask questions as soon as basic language skills are developed. In fact, asking questions is one of, if not the most basic and generic features of all human beings, at least, that is, until they get to school.

It makes sense that young persons would ask questions, lots of questions, about themselves and their environments, as all persons have vested interests in gaining an appreciation and understanding of those aspects and features of life that surround them, and that provide both opportunities and dangers, as understanding is a necessary component of being able to make good and relevant decisions. The basic feature of asking questions is also a fundamental way of relating to others, particularly caregivers and elders, in ways that encourage sharing, reflection, and growth, all features of any healthy social order. All children who are adequately cared for and supported have an unlimited curiosity about themselves, and everything that they encounter. However, the project of education soon channels and limits the types and nature of questions that children ask, raising the interesting scenario of the social institution that is responsible for passing on cultural knowledge and promoting intellectual skills that also restricts and constrains the innate curiosity is constitutive of all developing human beings.

While it is clear that the behavioral conditioning that takes place in schools has a high degree of social necessity, in order that children (of all ages) learn to cooperate and share space and activities in a collaborative manner, it is not so clear that restricting the natural and inherent curiosity that motivates and inspires children is equally, or even partially, beneficial. One might suggest that such manipulation may reveal some of the fundamental problems and dysfunctional attributes of any given culture, albeit usually not in an open or straightforward manner. It may also indicate that the project of education serves a social need that is not necessarily serving the best needs of the students subjected to such education. Raising the larger question of value, and providing the resources and opportunities for students to develop the critical skills that they require in order to make the important decisions that will determine the nature and manner of their lives, may also indicate that to a certain extent many educational facilities and projects are operating at cross-purposes, especially if the general well-being of their students is the primary criterion. Philip McShane, in many of his writings, asserts

that when an educator is teaching a student any particular skill set or discipline, that the educator is primarily teaching the student about the student's own self.⁸ An educational philosophy and project that respects and nurtures the inherent motives and capabilities of young people is much more likely to create a social environment where the concern and appreciation for values is both fundamental and foundational in all levels of social interaction, collaboration, and decision making. We are a long, long, way from making that a real possibility in any genuinely constructive fashion.

Despite this short and incomplete list of negative consequences due to the singular focus on monetary value, the threat to education has a far more serious problem with greater implications and consequences that threatens the ability of humans to adequately respond to the larger problems which we are now starting to recognize as a result of the unlimited and unethical expansion of global corporate projects. That problem is the complete lack of a systematic framework within which historical consciousness might be identified, cultivated, and developed, without which our collective abilities to adequately identify emerging problems and increasingly widespread social and cultural decline are all but non-existent. While the symptoms of decline are all too common, these symptoms are dealt with in isolated fashion, when dealt with at all. The root and systemic problems remain overlooked, or are considered to be too complex to adequately deal with. Fundamental levels of understanding actually existing contexts are required, and this requires critical historical consciousness. To put it bluntly, without historical consciousness, no one can recognize or identify contexts in an adequate fashion. Without being able to recognize contexts, the capacity to identify the nature and roots of the problems that we have to deal with disappears. If we cannot recognize contexts, we cannot ask the right questions. If we cannot ask the right questions, we cannot achieve adequate (let alone, correct) resolutions to problems. If we cannot do this, then decline and regression are inevitable, and human life will continue to become more stressful, increasingly unhappy and miserable, and finally catastrophic. In depriving societies and cultures of an adequate range and understanding of terminal values, or those

⁸ McShane makes this point, and related points, in many places in his extensive writings. Most of these ideas can be found on his website philipmcshane.org. For one of his earliest, and more accessible texts on these matters, see McShane, 1975/1981.

chosen values which embody the highest aspirations, important social resources are being destroyed, ignored, or marginalized. Those values which are freely chosen by people intending a life marked by self-transcendence (that is, where existing conditions are not normatively and singularly determinative in shaping human responses and activity), of positive growth and development characterized by a greater appreciation of the scope and comprehensiveness of life and possibilities, when representing actual values (and not only apparent or misguided values), are always and necessarily general in range, inasmuch as the social nature of human reality is primary and fundamental. Thus, any systematic distortion of the scale of values that concentrates on the primacy of the individual at the expense of and to the social dimension is critical. Values are also historically grounded, where all existing conditions and operative assumptions and biases have historical precedents, some of which we identify and understand, but most of which we do not. History is not a fixed, or static, dimension of reality, but rather consists of an ongoing examination and reflection of how human thought and action shaped, and continues to shape, the nature of our experienced realities and the implications of our own uninformed actions. Historical consciousness is an awareness of being situated in our own lives, and being affected by all of those social relationships and events that have had an effect on how we interpret and respond to the changing conditions and situations within which we find ourselves. Historical consciousness is also the ongoing awareness that as we interpret and act on the basis of our developing understanding, we are also contributing and affecting the world in a cumulative fashion, the effects of which are rarely clear, and that remain to be determined. If it was possible to establish historical consciousness as a basic attribute that all people could recognize and develop, it is unlikely that a distortion of the complexity of being human that was reduced to a sole focus on monetary value as the determinative criterion for determining who was, and was not, successful would exist, let alone be the determinative factor for the majority of people currently living on the planet. Historical consciousness would also permit the critical realization that even though not all people consciously appropriate the reductive monetary perspective as their fundamental orientation towards and within the world, that inasmuch as it is widespread and commonly acknowledged, it continues to distort most, if not all, of the shared common relationships within which we all function and rely on for our on-going lives. As history continues, it becomes

more and more difficult to find a normative orientation that is not subject to the fundamental distortions caused by the ethical reductionism to monetary accumulation, and which is demonstrated and maintained by the patterns of modern consumerism. Reversing this destructive trend requires a long-term perspective, wherein the cumulative negative evidence of contemporary social patterns is identified as such, and rejected as having, or representing, any actual normative ethical significance.

For ethicists and philosophers, recognizing our own complicity and acquiescence to these distorting patterns and sensibilities, is a necessary pre-condition if we are to become able to provide some constructive critical perspectives as thinkers and teachers. Otherwise, it is unlikely that we will be doing our readers and students any positive service, or providing avenues within which people might begin a critical examination of how their own experiences and values have been affected and distorted. Understanding the actual state of affairs in an adequately comprehensive fashion is a necessary pre-condition of being able to begin to do something constructive about it. Generating and maintaining such a critical perspective is the role of professional educators and thinkers. We all need help in order to begin to do this well. Refusing to accept the legitimacy of an economically determined and reductive framework as determinatively normative might be a good starting point.

Bibliography

- Fred Lawrence (2017), “Contemporary Economic and Political Disorders and Bernard Lonergan’s Macroeconomic Dynamics”, *Divyadaan*, 28 (1/2017), pp. 65–104.
- Bernard Lonergan (1992), *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, in: Robert E. Doran, Frederick E. Crowe (eds.), *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Volume 3, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bernard Lonergan (1993), *Topics in Education*, in: Robert E. Doran, Frederick E. Crowe (eds.), *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Volume 10, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bernard Lonergan (1998), *For a New Political Economy*, in: Philip J. McShane (ed.), *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Volume 21, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bernard Lonergan (1999), *Macroeconomic Dynamics: An Essay in Circulation Analysis*, in: Frederick G. Lawrence, Patrick H. Byrne (eds.), *The Collec-*

- ted Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Volume 15, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bernard Lonergan (1972/1994), *Method in Theology*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Philip J. McShane (1975/1981), *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations: Self-Axis of the Great Ascent*, Washington, D.C.: University Press of America.
- Philip J. McShane (1996), *Economics for Everyone: Das Jus Kapital*, Edmonton: Commonwealth Press.
- Philip J. McShane (2000), *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics: A Fresh Pragmatism*, Halifax, NS: Axial Press.
- Philip J. McShane, Bruce Anderson (2002), *Beyond Establishment Economics: No Thank You Mankiw*, Halifax: Axial Press.
- Philip J. McShane (2010), *Sane Economics and Fusionism*, Vancouver: Axial Publishing.
- Philip J. McShane (2014), *Piketty's Plight and the Global Future*, Vancouver: Axial Publishing.
- Philip J. McShane (2016), *Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*, Vancouver: Axial Publishing.
- Philip J. McShane (2017), *Economics for Everyone*, 3rd Edition, Vancouver, Axial Publishing.

DISTORZIJA VRIJEDNOSTI: EKONOMIJA I ETIČKI REDUKCIONIZAM

Michael George

Dok ekonomija igra nužnu ulogu u funkcioniranju i održavanju socijalne vrijednosti te u opskrbi životnim potrepštinama, suvremeno društvo pati od sistem-ske distorzije utoliko što je monetarna vrijednost postala zadani ili normativni standard za sve aspekte ljudske egzistencije. Ovo reduciranje vrijednosti ozbiljno utječe na mogućnosti ljudskog razvoja u cjelini jer se ti projekti koji promiču rast i razvoj vrednuju prvenstveno s obzirom na ekonomski potencijal. Osim toga, disfunkcionalno shvaćanje ekonomije i dalje podržava one političke i društvene ideologije koje potiču ekonomsku korist nauštrb ljudskih života. Manjak povijesne perspektive koji stvara ova redukcionistička perspektiva negativno utječe na sposobnost ljudi da prepoznaju nužne i konstitutivne vrijednosti koje bi omogućile svim osobama da donose promišljene i smislene odluke o svojim životima, da čine izbore koji su poželjni ako je društvo zainteresirano za promicanje kulturnih i transcendentnih vrijednosti, upravo one izbore koji smisao čine središtem ljudskih nastojanja.

Ključne riječi: *redukcija vrijednosti, ekonomija, odgoj i obrazovanje, epistemološke pozicije, kritički realizam*