

Needs as an Irreducible Concept :

A Consideration of David Wiggins's Arguments on Analyzing the Concept of Needs

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David Wiggins is famous for his works in the area of metaphysics, philosophy of language, philosophical logic, and moral philosophy. However, his analyses on the concept of “needs” in the field of moral philosophy and political philosophy are not well-known in Japan. Although other theorists discuss the topic, it is acknowledged that the details behind the concept remain unclear. In my view, Wiggins’ arguments about needs are more sophisticated and important than others, and are also important in the field of legal philosophy.

I begin this paper with a survey and summary of his arguments which analyze and formularize this concept. According to Wiggins, needs are closely related to “necessity” as a modal concept, and this concept is formulated as a fluctuating variable. Next, I explain how the concept of needs is related to other normative concepts, namely, justice, equality, and rights, to which we sometimes reduce the concept of needs. However, Wiggins claims that this concept of needs is *sui generis*, and that these other normative concepts are sometimes in conflict with that of needs. Finally, I reply to anticipated objections and questions, and give my conclusions on this topic.