actual interests and theories, have proposed various alternatives, including theories holding that the value of a thing depends on what a subject would desire or have an interest in if he were fully rational or if desires were based on full information. Such theories may be called “counterfactual” desire theories since they take value to be dependent not upon a subject’s actual interests but upon what a subject would desire if certain conditions, which do not obtain, were to obtain.

Value theory is also concerned with the nature of value. Some philosophers have denied that sentences of the forms ‘X is good’ or ‘X is intrinsically good’ are, strictly speaking, either true or false. As with other forms of ethical discourse, they claim that anyone who utters these sentences is either expressing his emotional attitudes or else prescribing or commanding something. Other philosophers hold that such sentences can express what is true or false, but disagree about the nature of value and the meaning of value terms like ‘good’, ‘bad’, and ‘better’. Some philosophers, such as Moore, hold that in a truth of the form ‘X is intrinsically good’, ‘good’ refers to a simple, unanalyzable, non-natural property, a property not identical with or analyzable by any “natural” property such as being pleasant or being desired. Moore’s view is one form of non-naturalism. Other philosophers, such as Brentano, hold that ‘good’ is a syncategorematic expression; as such it does not refer to a property or relation at all, though it contributes to the meaning of the sentence. Still other philosophers have held that ‘X is good’ and ‘X is intrinsically good’ can be analyzed in natural or non-ethical terms. This sort of naturalism about value is illustrated by R. B. Perry, who holds that ‘X is valuable’ means ‘X is an object of interest’. The history of value theory is full of other attempted naturalistic analyses, some of which identify or analyze ‘good’ in terms of pleasure or being the object of rational desire. Many philosophers argue that naturalism is preferable on epistemic grounds. If, e.g., ‘X is valuable’ just means ‘X is an object of interest’, then in order to know whether something is valuable, one need only know whether it is the object of someone’s interest. Our knowledge of value is fundamentally no different in kind from our knowledge of any other empirical fact. This argument, however, is not decisive against non-naturalism, since it is not obvious that there is no synthetic a priori knowledge of the sort Moore takes as the fundamental value cognition. Furthermore, it is not clear that one cannot combine non-naturalism concerning value with a broadly empirical epistemology, one that takes certain kinds of experience as epistemic grounds for beliefs about value.

See also ethics, eudaemonism, hedonism, Moore, value.

van Fraassen, Bas (b.1941), Dutch American philosopher who has developed constructive empiricism, which is among the most significant forms of empiricism in philosophy of science. On this view, science aims to provide empirically adequate theories that are true of the observable realm, but need not be true simpliciter. The Scientific Image (1980) developed this conception together with an empiricist account of explanation (as answering why-questions) and a modal interpretation of probability that avoids commitment to real modalities in nature. To challenge the view that science is committed to such modalities, in Laws and Symmetry (1989) van Fraassen questioned the adequacy of the concept of a law of nature: symmetry (as achieved by transformations that leave relevant structures invariant) is better suited to playing the traditional role assigned to laws. A detailed case study in the context of quantum mechanics then followed: Quantum Mechanics: An Empiricist View (1991). After developing an empiricist view of science, van Fraassen shifted his attention to the nature of empiricism. In The Empirical Stance (2002), instead of conceptualizing empiricism as a doctrine, he argued that it is better understood as a stance: an attitude, in the sense of an epistemic policy. This conception avoided the incoherence of earlier empiricist proposals that failed to satisfy their own empiricist standards, and paved the way for examining scientific representation and its role in science (Scientific Representation, 2008). Born in the Netherlands, van Fraassen is now an American citizen and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University. See also CONSTRUCTIVE EMPIRICISM, EMPIRICISM, PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE.

Vanini, Giulio Cesare (c.1584–1619), Italian philosopher, a Renaissance Aristotelian who studied law and theology. He became a monk and traveled all over Europe. After abjuring, he taught and practiced medicine. He was burned at the stake by the Inquisition. His major work is four volumes of dialogues, De admirandis naturae reginae deaeque mortalium arcantis (“On the Secrets of Nature, Queen and Goddess of Mortal Beings,” 1616). He was