International Journal of
Science, Technology and Management
https://www.ioro.org/ijstm

Ten Plus Theories of Everything – Version 1

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Manuscript Version 1 · October 2026

Abstract

The search for a single principle that explains why human beings act as they do has occupied philosophers, psychologists, economists, and theologians for millennia. In physics, a "theory of everything" denotes a hypothetical framework that unifies all fundamental interactions; in this paper the phrase is used in an analogous but metaphorical sense, to denote a proposition that purports to explain the ultimate purpose of all human action. We present thirteen candidate propositions, each of the form "whatever you do, ultimately it is to attain X and help others attain X": the Happiness, Kindness, Peace, Money, Health, Technology, Love, Satisfaction, Excellence, Respect, Intelligence, GOD, and Parents Theories of Everything. For each theory we state the proposition, review supporting literature from philosophy, psychology, economics, and religious studies, illustrate its application, and discuss its limitations. We then compare the theories, propose a taxonomy that groups them into families, and discuss their falsifiability. This is Version 1; later versions will correct errors in this article and add further theories.

Keywords: theory of everything; human motivation; ultimate purpose; well-being; happiness; kindness; love; philosophy of action; interdisciplinary theory

Introduction

Human behavior is strikingly diverse: people study, farm, trade, pray, build, heal, care for their families, and create art. A persistent question across disciplines is whether this diversity conceals a unity, that is, whether a single ultimate purpose underlies every action. In theoretical physics, the pursuit of a "final theory" that unifies all forces is regarded as a central aspiration [28]. By analogy, one may ask whether a unifying principle exists for human action.

Candidate answers have been offered by many traditions. Aristotle proposed that eudaimonia, the flourishing life, is the final end of all action [1]; Bentham proposed the maximization of pleasure [2]; Maslow proposed a hierarchy of needs [19]; and religious traditions have proposed devotion to the divine [23, 24]. This paper takes the position that these proposals are best treated as a family of related, structurally similar propositions and examines thirteen of them side by side.

The paper makes three contributions. First, it states thirteen candidate "theories of everything" in a common form. Second, it connects each to relevant literature. Third, it provides a critical comparison and a taxonomy to guide future empirical and philosophical work. Because the work is presented as Version 1, the formulations should be regarded as provisional.

International Journal of Science, Technology and Management (IJSTM)
Volume 1 | Issue 1 | 2026 | Article ID: 3501-9654-6974 | https://doi.org/10.64823/ijstm.2601007
IORO Publications · Texas, USA · www.ioro.org

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Conceptual Framework

Definition and Scope

Throughout this paper, a "Theory of Everything" (ToE) in the human-action sense is a proposition of the following canonical form: for any action performed by a person, the ultimate purpose of that action is to attain a state or value X for oneself and to help others attain X. Formally, let A be the set of actions available to an agent i, and let X denote a target value. A theory asserts that for every action a in A, the terminal justification of a is either X(i), the attainment of X by the agent, or X(j), the attainment of X by some other agent j, or both. Proximate goals, such as studying for an examination or preparing a meal, are regarded as instrumental to this terminal justification.

Dual Structure: Self and Others

Each theory has a self-directed component ("be X") and an other-directed component ("make others X"). This dual structure reflects the observation that human motivation is simultaneously personal and social [18]. It also provides a natural bridge to Kant's principle that persons should be treated both as ends in themselves and as ends for others [30].

Methodological Note

The approach is conceptual and integrative. Each theory is examined in four parts: a statement, a rationale supported by literature, illustrative applications, and critical considerations. Following Popper [29], we acknowledge that a proposition that can be reinterpreted to fit any observation has limited empirical content; this concern is addressed in the Discussion. The term "theory" is used here in the broad, philosophical sense of a systematic proposition, not in the strict sense of a formally tested scientific theory.

1. Happiness Theory of Everything

1.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to be happy and make others happy.*

1.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

The pursuit of happiness has long been proposed as the organizing end of human action. Aristotle described eudaimonia as the end for the sake of which all other ends are chosen [1], and Bentham grounded his entire moral system on the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain [2]. Modern psychology distinguishes hedonic well-being (positive affect and life satisfaction) from eudaimonic well-being (meaning and self-realization), and treats both as central outcomes of human striving [3, 5].

The "make others happy" clause finds empirical support in prosocial-spending research, in which participants who spent money on others reported greater happiness than those who spent it on themselves [4]. Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory further suggests that positive emotions expand attention and build durable personal and social resources, so that one person's happiness tends to propagate to those around them [7].

1.3 Illustrative Applications

A student studies diligently to build a rewarding career (self-directed happiness) and then mentors juniors, deriving pleasure from their success (other-directed happiness). A manager who automates a tedious workflow is happier for the saved time and also makes the team happier.

1.4 Critical Considerations

The theory risks tautology if "happiness" is defined so broadly that every action qualifies. Some behaviors, such as sacrificial duty, appear to trade personal happiness for other values. Measurement of happiness also varies across cultures and instruments, so empirical tests must specify the construct precisely.

2. Kindness Theory of Everything

2.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to be kind to self and be kind to others.*

2.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Kindness, understood as benevolent and caring regard for sentient beings, is a cornerstone of nearly every ethical tradition. Kant's formulation of duties of beneficence frames helping others as a rational obligation [30], while contemporary psychology highlights its self-directed counterpart: self-compassion, defined by self-kindness, a sense of common humanity, and mindfulness, is associated with psychological resilience [6].

Evidence from positive psychology suggests that acts of kindness are intrinsically rewarding and strengthen social bonds [4, 7]. The theory therefore interprets professional diligence, rest, forgiveness, and generosity alike as expressions of a single orientation: care directed toward oneself and toward others.

2.3 Illustrative Applications

Taking adequate rest after overwork is an act of kindness toward oneself; teaching a difficult concept patiently is an act of kindness toward a learner. Even disciplined refusal, such as declining to enable harmful behavior, can be read as kindness exercised with wisdom.

2.4 Critical Considerations

Kindness is sometimes confused with leniency, and genuine kindness may require firmness. The theory must therefore distinguish short-term comfort from long-term benefit. Cultural norms also differ on what counts as a kind act.

3. Peace Theory of Everything

3.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to be peaceful and make others peaceful.*

3.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Galtung's distinction between negative peace (the absence of direct violence) and positive peace (the presence of justice and cooperative structures) [8] offers a useful vocabulary for this theory. At the personal level, inner peace refers to equanimity and freedom from chronic distress; at the social level, it refers to harmonious coexistence.

Because humans are fundamentally social, as Baumeister and Leary argue in their account of the need to belong [18], conflict is itself a source of suffering, and securing peace is a precondition for pursuing nearly every other goal. The theory proposes that safety measures, diplomacy, meditation, and legal institutions can all be seen as efforts to cultivate peace within and between people.

3.3 Illustrative Applications

A negotiator resolving a labor dispute, a citizen practicing meditation, and an engineer designing safety systems are each, on this theory, pursuing peace at different scales.

3.4 Critical Considerations

Peace can be pursued through unjust means, and enforced calm may mask oppression, which Galtung's notion of structural violence addresses [8]. Some actions, such as principled protest, deliberately disturb peace in service of a more durable peace, which the theory must accommodate.

4. Money Theory of Everything

4.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to earn money and make others earn money.*

4.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Economics has long treated the generation of income and wealth as the engine of social organization. Smith attributed national prosperity to the division of labor and exchange [9], and Maslow's hierarchy places physiological and safety needs, which are largely met through income, at its base [19]. Sen argues that income is not an end in itself but a means to expanded capabilities and freedoms [11], which suggests an instrumental reading of the theory.

The "make others earn money" clause is consistent with the logic of employment, entrepreneurship, and trade, in which one party's earnings create opportunities for others. Kahneman and Deaton report that higher income is associated with better life evaluation [10], while Dunn and colleagues show that spending on others can raise well-being [4].

4.3 Illustrative Applications

An entrepreneur who founds a firm earns profit and creates jobs, so that employees also earn. A teacher's salary and a student's future earning capacity are linked through education.

4.4 Critical Considerations

The same evidence that supports the theory also limits it: Kahneman and Deaton find that emotional well-being does not rise indefinitely with income [10]. Many activities (art, worship, parenting, volunteering) are not plausibly motivated by earning. The theory is therefore most defensible as an economic lens rather than an exhaustive account.

5. Health Theory of Everything

5.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to be healthy and make others healthy.*

5.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease [12]. Under this broad definition, a very large share of human activity, including nutrition, shelter, safety, social connection, and meaningful work, can be interpreted as health-sustaining. Engel's biopsychosocial model makes the same point within medicine [13].

Maslow's hierarchy places physiological and safety needs at the foundation of motivation [19], and health is the platform on which all other pursuits depend. The "make others healthy" clause is visible in public health, medicine, sanitation, and caregiving.

5.3 Illustrative Applications

Agriculture feeds populations, civil engineering supplies clean water, and software supports diagnosis; all contribute to the health of individuals and communities.

5.4 Critical Considerations

Individuals sometimes knowingly sacrifice health for other aims, such as mountaineers, soldiers, and researchers working through illness. The theory's breadth under the WHO definition may also dilute its explanatory power.

6. Technology Theory of Everything

6.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to build technology and make others build technology.*

6.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Arthur characterizes technology as a combination of components and practices harnessed to fulfil human purposes, evolving through recombination of earlier technologies [14]. Mokyr's economic history shows that sustained technological creativity has been a primary driver of growth and welfare over the long run [15]. Seen broadly, language, institutions, and methods of organization can themselves be regarded as technologies.

The "make others build technology" clause corresponds to education, open-source collaboration, standards, and knowledge diffusion, all of which multiply the number of builders. Sen's capability perspective suggests that technology is valuable chiefly for the freedoms it expands [11], which is compatible with treating building as an ongoing, collective enterprise.

6.3 Illustrative Applications

A software engineer writes code and publishes it as open source, enabling others to build further applications; a professor trains students who go on to found laboratories.

6.4 Critical Considerations

The theory depends on an expansive definition of technology. Contemplative, artistic, and relational pursuits resist this description unless technology is stretched to include practices of the mind. Technology can also cause harm, so building is not intrinsically beneficial.

7. Love Theory of Everything

7.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to love yourself and love others.*

7.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Fromm argued that love is an active capacity that includes care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge, and that self-love and love of others are interdependent rather than opposed [16]. Sternberg's triangular theory decomposes interpersonal love into intimacy, passion, and commitment [17], while attachment theory documents the lifelong significance of secure bonds [26].

Baumeister and Leary argue that humans have a pervasive drive to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal bonds [18]. On this view, work, creativity, and service are often channels through which love is expressed and sustained, and the theory treats love as the most fundamental of the relational motives.

7.3 Illustrative Applications

A parent works long hours to provide for a family; an artist creates in order to share beauty; a physician heals out of care for patients. The proximate activities differ while the ultimate orientation is love.

7.4 Critical Considerations

The notion of love must be defined carefully to avoid conflation with attachment or possessiveness. Motives such as curiosity or survival do not obviously reduce to love, so the theory needs a clear operational definition to be testable.

8. Satisfaction Theory of Everything

8.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to be satisfied and make others satisfied.*

8.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Satisfaction denotes a cognitive-evaluative judgement that one's life or situation meets one's standards, and is commonly assessed with instruments such as the Satisfaction With Life Scale [34]. Simon's concept of satisficing holds that decision makers seek outcomes that are "good enough" rather than optimal [33], which positions satisfaction as the stopping point of striving.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is built on the idea that the satisfaction of one level of need allows attention to turn to the next [19]. The "make others satisfied" clause is reflected in customer service, governance, and design practice, where success is measured by the satisfaction of users and citizens.

8.3 Illustrative Applications

A designer iterates on a product until users are satisfied; a citizen votes for policies expected to meet community needs; a researcher stops experimenting once the hypothesis is adequately supported.

8.4 Critical Considerations

Satisfaction can be adaptive and therefore misleading: people may be satisfied with unjust or unhealthy circumstances. Some pursuits are driven by deliberate dissatisfaction, which spurs innovation. The theory therefore requires a distinction between healthy and complacent satisfaction.

9. Excellence Theory of Everything

9.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to become excellent and make others excellent.*

9.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Aristotle treated excellence (arete) as the fulfilment of a thing's characteristic function and as the basis of the good life [1]. Research on expert performance shows that high attainment results from sustained deliberate practice and guided feedback [20], and self-determination theory identifies competence as a basic psychological need that is satisfied by growth in mastery [31].

The "make others excellent" clause corresponds to coaching, teaching, and mentorship, in which one's own mastery is multiplied by raising the standards and abilities of others.

9.3 Illustrative Applications

A musician practices for years and then teaches students; a scientist refines methods and trains collaborators; an organization invests in continuing education for its staff.

9.4 Critical Considerations

An excessive focus on excellence can foster perfectionism and anxiety. Not every meaningful action aims at mastery; leisure and rest, for instance, may be valued for their own sake. Standards of excellence are also context dependent.

10. Respect Theory of Everything

10.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to become respected and make others become respected.*

10.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Honneth's theory of recognition maintains that human identity is formed through relations of love, rights, and social esteem, and that denial of recognition is experienced as moral injury [21]. Kant's principle that persons must be treated as ends and never merely as means gives respect a foundational place in ethics [30].

Esteem and recognition occupy a distinct tier in Maslow's hierarchy [19], and social belonging is closely tied to being valued by others [18]. The theory interprets achievement, etiquette, civic participation, and advocacy as efforts to earn respect while extending it to others.

10.3 Illustrative Applications

A professional builds a reputation for integrity and in turn practices fair, dignified treatment of colleagues; a community leader campaigns for equal recognition of marginalized groups.

10.4 Critical Considerations

Respect can be sought through status competition and domination, which is not the benign pattern the theory intends. The theory should distinguish earned respect from fear or deference. Cultures also differ in the expression of respect.

11. Intelligence Theory of Everything

11.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to become intelligent and make others intelligent.*

11.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Intelligence is not a single faculty. Gardner proposed multiple intelligences (including linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) [22], and Aristotle regarded the exercise of reason as the highest human activity [1]. Studies of expertise demonstrate that capability is cultivated through structured learning [20].

The "make others intelligent" clause corresponds to education, publication, scientific communication, and collaborative inquiry. On this theory, learning is the common thread of curiosity-driven research, apprenticeship, reading, and reflective practice, as well as the development of artificial systems that extend human cognition.

11.3 Illustrative Applications

A teacher designs a curriculum that deepens learners' reasoning; a researcher publishes open findings that others can build on; a mentor develops a protégé's judgement.

11.4 Critical Considerations

The definition of intelligence is contested, and conflating it with test performance is reductive. Wisdom, compassion, and moral character are not captured by narrow measures of intelligence, and the theory must adopt a broad conception to remain plausible.

12. GOD Theory of Everything

12.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to LOVE GOD and make others LOVE GOD.*

12.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Many religious traditions teach that devotion to the divine is the highest end of human life. Augustine's Confessions famously describes the restless human heart as finding rest only in God [24]. James's classic study of religious experience documents the transformative power of devotion across traditions [23], and Pargament's research shows how religious orientation provides meaning and coping resources [25]. Frankl's work on the search for meaning further suggests that a transcendent orientation can sustain individuals under extreme adversity [27].

The "make others love God" clause corresponds to worship, teaching, charitable service, and community-building within faith traditions, where devotion is understood as something to be shared. The theory is stated here as a faith-based proposition, and the term "GOD" may be understood according to the reader's own tradition or conception of the ultimate.

12.3 Illustrative Applications

For a devout practitioner, prayer, ethical living, and service to the poor are all understood as acts of devotion; professional work is offered as a form of worship.

12.4 Critical Considerations

This theory rests on theological premises that cannot be empirically verified and is not shared by non-theistic worldviews. It is presented respectfully as one among several candidate frameworks. Scientific evaluation is limited to its psychological and social correlates, not its metaphysical claims.

13. Parents Theory of Everything

13.1 Statement

> *Whatever you do ultimately it is to be happy and make your parents happy.*

13.2 Rationale and Supporting Literature

Attachment theory shows that the bond between child and caregiver is among the most formative relationships in human life [26]. Filial piety, expressed in the Confucian Analects, holds that honoring and caring for parents is the root of virtue [32], and Aristotle likewise recognized the special debts owed to those who gave us life and upbringing [1]. The need to belong is first satisfied within the family [18].

This theory is a specialization of the Happiness Theory: it retains the self-directed happiness component but narrows the “others” to one’s parents. Within many cultures, career choices, marriage, and migration are strongly influenced by the wish to make one’s parents proud and secure.

13.3 Illustrative Applications

A graduate accepts a stable job partly to ease parental worries; a successful professional supports parents’ health care and retirement; a child shares achievements with parents to give them joy.

13.4 Critical Considerations

The theory is culturally specific and may not describe individuals whose parents are absent, estranged, or deceased. It can also create conflict between personal aspirations and parental expectations, a tension that a mature version of the theory should address.

Comparative Analysis

Table 1 summarizes the thirteen theories, identifying for each the ultimate end, its principal disciplinary anchor, and the main challenge it faces.

Table 1. Summary comparison of the thirteen theories.

No.	Theory	Ultimate End	Principal Anchor	Principal Challenge
1	Happiness	Happiness of self and others	Philosophy; positive psychology	Risk of tautology
2	Kindness	Kindness to self and others	Ethics; self-compassion research	Kindness vs. leniency
3	Peace	Peace within and between people	Peace studies	Peace through unjust means

No.	Theory	Ultimate End	Principal Anchor	Principal Challenge
4	Money	Earning for self and others	Economics	Instrumental, not terminal
5	Health	Health of self and others	Public health; medicine	Voluntary health sacrifice
6	Technology	Building technology and builders	Economic history; technology studies	Over-broad definition
7	Love	Love of self and others	Psychology; attachment theory	Definition of love
8	Satisfaction	Satisfaction of self and others	Decision theory; well-being research	Adaptive satisfaction
9	Excellence	Excellence of self and others	Virtue ethics; expertise research	Perfectionism
10	Respect	Respect for self and others	Recognition theory; Kantian ethics	Status competition
11	Intelligence	Intelligence of self and others	Cognitive science; education	Contested definition
12	GOD	Love of God by self and others	Theology; psychology of religion	Unverifiable premises
13	Parents	Happiness of self and parents	Attachment theory; filial ethics	Cultural specificity

Discussion

A Taxonomy of the Theories

The thirteen theories can be grouped into five families. The affective family (Happiness, Peace, Satisfaction) concerns inner states of well-being. The relational family (Kindness, Love, Respect) concerns the quality of bonds between persons. The developmental family (Excellence, Intelligence) concerns growth in capability. The instrumental family (Money, Health, Technology) concerns resources and enabling conditions. The transcendent and filial family (GOD, Parents) concerns relationships to ultimate and originating sources of one's existence. Several theories are logically related; for instance, the Parents Theory is a special case of the Happiness Theory, and the Money, Health, and Technology Theories can be interpreted as instrumental routes to the affective and relational ends.

Monism, Pluralism, and Complementarity

If each theory is read as an exclusive claim that X alone is the ultimate purpose, the theories conflict. A more productive reading treats them as complementary lenses, each of which illuminates a different aspect of the same behavior. Under this pluralist interpretation, an act such as teaching a child may simultaneously express kindness, love, intelligence, and the wish for the child's happiness. A monist reading, in contrast, would

require an argument that one theory is fundamental and the others derived, a program that Aristotle's treatment of eudaimonia as the final end exemplifies [1].

Falsifiability and Empirical Operationalization

Popper's criterion requires that a scientific hypothesis forbid some observable outcomes [29]. Because "ultimate purpose" is an inner and interpretive notion, each of the thirteen theories can be reinterpreted to absorb apparent counterexamples. To convert them into testable hypotheses, future work could (a) operationalize each X using validated scales, such as life-satisfaction measures [34]; (b) use experience sampling to record participants' self-reported reasons for everyday actions; (c) ask participants to rank the thirteen ends in order of importance and compare rankings across cultures, age groups, and occupations; and (d) examine whether other-directed components predict well-being, as the prosocial-spending evidence suggests [4].

Ethical Considerations

Any proposition claiming to explain the purpose of all action should be applied with humility. The theories should not be used to judge individuals' motives or to impose a single value system. This is particularly important for the GOD and Parents theories, which carry religious and cultural commitments that are rightly matters of personal conviction.

Limitations

This work has several limitations. First, it is conceptual: no new empirical data are reported. Second, the literature review is selective and illustrative rather than systematic. Third, the thirteen theories are not exhaustive, and they are not shown to be mutually exclusive or jointly exhaustive of human motives. Fourth, several terms (happiness, love, intelligence, respect, and GOD) are defined differently across disciplines and cultures. Finally, because the manuscript was drafted with the assistance of an artificial intelligence system, errors of fact, attribution, or interpretation may be present, as noted in the Disclaimer.

Conclusion and Future Work

This paper has presented thirteen candidate theories of everything for human action, each asserting that whatever one does, one ultimately seeks a particular value for oneself and for others. We reviewed the philosophical, psychological, economic, and religious grounds for each theory, identified their limitations, and offered a taxonomy that organizes them. Their shared structure, in which a self-directed aim is paired with an other-directed aim, is the most consistent pattern across the set and may merit further investigation.

Subsequent versions of this work will correct any errors identified in this article and will add further theories of everything, consistent with the title's "ten plus." Planned directions include formal axiomatization, cross-cultural surveys, experience-sampling studies, and an analysis of how the theories relate to one another in a hierarchy of ends. Reader feedback is welcome at the email address given above.

Acknowledgements

My heartfelt gratitude goes to everyone and everything that has, in ways both seen and unseen, directly or indirectly contributed to the person I am today. Every person, experience, opportunity, challenge, and circumstance has played a part in shaping my journey.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

This study did not generate, collect, or analyze any datasets; therefore, data availability is not applicable.

AI Usage Disclosure

This paper has been generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) system in response to prompts supplied by the author. The thematic scope, the titles and statements of the thirteen theories, and the overall direction of the work were specified by the author; the drafting of the manuscript text, including the supporting discussion and the selection of literature, was carried out by the AI system. The content is intended to stimulate scholarly discussion and does not constitute established empirical findings, professional advice, or the official position of any institution with which the author is or has been affiliated. Although care has been taken to cite genuine and relevant sources, readers should independently verify all references, claims, and interpretations before relying on them. The author assumes responsibility for the decision to publish this work, and welcomes corrections, which will be incorporated in future versions.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, S.G.; methodology, S.G.; software, S.G; validation, S.G; formal analysis, S.G.; writing—original draft, S.G.; writing—review and editing, S.G.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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