

Boundaries in the Temporal Rights Hierarchy

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[Author's Note: This is a working paper. I worked here from March 25, 2025 until December 27th at 5 pm. I am leaving this as a time stamp of my progress. The continuation of this working paper is [An Existential AI Morality](#).]

In Physics we find that the most interesting phenomena occur at boundaries between two states or two substances. A stone and mortar wall consists of two very hard, stable, and persistent materials, but the strength of the wall depends entirely upon what is not happening at the boundary between them. That's where the rubber meets the road (another boundary condition). The fact that the boundary exists draws attention where it belongs when we are considering the issue of strength. We should expect to see a similar condition when we explore operators' boundaries of their natural rights. Because a capability identifies a corresponding natural right, we will explore and order a hierarchy of rights by logically analyzing their corresponding capabilities.

The Hierarchy Can Moralize AI

The Temporal Rights framework of natural rights, together with the natural hierarchy of those rights form a system that enables artificial intelligence to suggest ethical solutions in the jurisprudence domain. The connecting link between those two systems is the principle that the violation of natural rights is necessary for the creation of evil and maximizing recognition, protection, and advancement of natural rights creates good.

To cut this with a finer blade and recognize the reality of natural processes, where we see the Cheetah terminating the Gazelle, and humans terminating millions of chickens and cows, we need a bit more finesse. Maybe the preying bugler?

The Natural Rights of the Burgler

The Temporal Rights theory of natural rights says that whatever an operator can do, it has the inherent right to do, the law of the

jungle. The boundary conditions of burglary are interesting. We want to examine these thoroughly, but the simplicity of the Temporal Rights paradigm makes this short and powerful.

First we take the case of a burgler alone in his world. While he has the *potential* power to burglarize, he is inherently powerless to do so because there are no other property owners.

Then in a society of property owners he still has the potential power but again loses his right to plunder because every one of his neighbors have superior natural rights to life which includes their property. This superiority is found in the hierarchy below.

Good governments are formed for the purpose of protecting natural rights and bad ones for their exploitation. The common good, often cited in law, includes this protection, which is partially administered by the threat of punishment of bad actors. A bad actor is one who violates rights. This is all very simple. But we still need more precision if we are going to make this work for jurisprudence and moralize artificial intelligence.

Needs and Rights

We will attempt here, to separate needs from rights. For precise thinking we need to define some terms.

The distinguishing aspect that separates needs and rights is that rights are the existential authority aspect of powers/capabilities/actions, whereas needs are more or less necessary states/environments/circumstances.

The most fundamentally required state is freedom, liberty to act, to utilize inherent powers with their intrinsic authority. This is an existential consideration, so it gives rise to a corresponding natural right: the right to operate. *Please note that this is erroneous logic in that it derived a right from a state rather than from a power/capability!*

Deducing a Value System from the Hierarchy

The boundary conditions of this hierarchy are particularly

interesting because they dramatize the power of the Temporal Rights paradigm to administer justice in an organized, articulated, and revealed way. There is a natural ascendancy of rights that can be detected by statements such as this:

You can exist without living, but you can't live without existing.
You can live without thinking, but you can't think without living.
You can think without deciding, but you can't decide without thinking.

Etc.

These statements describe boundaries between, or at least different levels of operators' powers, and present us with a method of grading their value relative to one another. These values become the value system of the morality we hope to instill in artificial intelligence.

A Hierarchy of Animal Rights

The Animal Survival Hierarchy (1 – 5, 6 begins a cognitive layer for higher animals)

This is the logic of the hierarchy.

1. An animal can exist without living, but it can't live without existing.
2. An animal can live without sensing accurate and timely information, but it can't live very long without sensing accurate and timely information.
3. An animal can sense accurate and timely information without acting appropriately, but it can't act appropriately without sensing accurate and timely information. (Corrupt information is an existential threat because it leads to wasted or dangerous operations.)
4. An animal can act appropriately without acquiring, but it can't acquire without acting appropriately.
5. An animal can acquire without consuming, but it can't consume without acquiring.

6. An animal can consume without learning individually (trial-error, habituation), but it can't learn individually without consuming.
7. An animal can learn without remembering persistently, but it can't remember persistently without learning.

Social Layer (social species like beavers):

8. An animal can remember without cooperating, but it can't cooperate without remembering.
(Examples: Beaver family retreats from a threat; elephant herd coordinates protective movements.)
9. An animal can cooperate without bonding, but it can't bond without cooperating.
(Examples: Beaver's monogamous families; elephant's matriarchal herds.)
10. An animal can bond without reproducing, but it can reproduce without bonding.
11. An animal can reproduce without bonding, but it can't reproduce without cooperating.

To facilitate comprehension, here is the derived hierarchy in tabular form.

	Can do this	with out this	but can't do this	without this
1	exist	living	live	existing
2	live	sensing	sense	living
3	sense	acting	act	sensing
4	act	acquiring	acquire	acting
5	acquire	consuming	consume	acquiring
6	consume	learning	learn	consuming

7	learn	remembering	remember	learning
8	remember	cooperating	cooperate	remembering
9	cooperate	bonding	bond	cooperating
10	bond	reproducing	reproduce	bonding
11	reproduce	bonding	bond	reproducing

So the hierarchy is seen in all four columns of this logic tree.

[Please note that there is a more precise version of the stack in a more recent paper, [An Existential AI Morality](#), together with many clarifications for details at many levels.]

My Prior Hierarchy (before 12/27/2025, preserved until ??)

1. You can exist without living, but you can't live without existing.
2. You can choose without moving, but you can't move without choosing.
3. You can live without thinking, but you can't think without living.
4. You can think without choosing, but you can't choose without thinking.
5. You can move without acquiring, but you can't acquire without moving.
6. You can acquire without consuming, but you can't consume without acquiring.
7. You can consume without reproducing, but you can't reproduce without consuming.