THE PROCESS OF VALUING AS A TEST OF THE EXISTENCE OF A VALUE CLAIM

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Debaters arguing propositions of value sometimes find the analysis of those propositions to be a confounding experience because of confusion over what constitutes a value. Between experts, there is only limited agreement on how a value should be defined.

> The meaning of the term value is by no means clear in the social sciences of in philosophy (Macmillan & Kneller, 1964; Superka, Ahrens & Hedstrom, 1976). There is no consensus for definition. About the only agreement that emerges is that a value represents something important in human existence. Perhaps because it is such a pivotal term, each school of thought invests the word with its own definition.[1]

For example, Jung's analytic theory views value as an amount of psychic energy that can have an impact on behavior.

> Value is a measure of intensity. When we speak of placing a high value upon a particular idea or feeling, we mean that the idea or feeling exerts a considerable force in instigating and directing behavior. A person who values truth will expend a great deal of energy in the search for it. One who places great value upon power will be highly motivated to obtain power. Conversely, if something is of trivial value it will have little energy attached to it.[2]

Maslow wrote of the "Difficulty with the Word 'Values'" when he indicated that:

> 'Values' are defined in many ways, and mean different things to different people. As a matter of fact, it is so confusing semantically that I am convinced we will soon give up this catchall word in favor of more precise and more operational definitions for each of the many submeanings that have been attached to it.[3]

The operational definitions Maslow envisions may be within the purview of the behavioral scientists who work with techniques of "values clarification." Their task is to assist persons to discover what they value. The method they employ is "the process of valuing."[4] This theory asserts that rather than taking the popular position of values influencing behavior, from a theory such as the previously stated Jungian analysis, that it is most useful to discover how persons behave in determining what they value. If the behavior, the process of valuing, is complete, then the observer can be assured that a value has been identified.

The process of valuing is defined by Raths, Harmin, and Simon with seven requirements that must be satisfied for something to be labeled as a value.[5] The requirements are as follows:

"1. Choosing freely." When there is something significant enough for it to guide behavior, it is probably something that has been freely chosen. Coercion is the absence of choice. Coerced choices seldom result in values. It is unlikely that something will be valued to a high degree if the selection of it was predetermined, coerced, or nonexistent.

"2. Choosing from alternatives." Value theorists believe that the greater the range of options open to a person, the greater will be her commitment to the option ultimately selected. Choosing from a range of options

increases the likelihood that the choice represents a value. This requirement should be appealing to debate coaches since it is analogous to the theory applied in brainstorming a variety of options for case analysis. A debater should feel most confident with a case that has resulted from analyzing and rejecting a range of case approaches, in favor of the selected case analysis.

"3. Choosing after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative." Rath, Harmin and Simon feel that a value must emerge in a "context of understanding:"

> For a value to guide a person's life intelligently and meaningfully, we believe it must emerge in a context of understanding. Only when the consequences of each of the alternatives are understood and considered is a choice not impulsive or thoughtless. There is an important cognitive factor here. The more we understand about the consequences that flow from each alternative, the more we can make an informed choice, a choice that flows from our full intelligence. Thus, we prefer to exclude from the term values those choices not making a full use of intelligence.[6]

"4. Prizings and cherishing." That which is a value carries a positive connotation in the sense that it not only makes a person happy, but it is probably also prized, cherished, respected and esteemed. In a broad sense we judge that which we value in a positive manner.

"5. Affirming." A value is something a person is willing to talk about. When asked to relate to that value choice there is a tendency for the person to be proud of the choice and to advocate for it. Values are often apparent because of the rhetoric of the person or persons possessing the value, i.e., the value is expressed.

"6. Acting upon choices." A value becomes a motivator that guides behavioral choices. This requirement is distinct from the previous requirement of affirming the choice. It is possible to speak positively of something that is labeled as a value, but not take action on it. Everyone is familiar with persons who advocate certain choices and fail to behaviorally make those choices themselves. Therefore a value is both rhetorical and behavioral. A true value affects lives because it directs actions.

"7. Repeating." It is unlikely that something is a value if it only effects a person's life once. "Values tend to be persistent."[7] Values tend to appear as a pattern in a person or group's existence.

These seven requirements may be applied as criteria to establish whether or not the process of valuing is occurring. The seven requirements can be easily summarized with three dimensions. The first is the developmental dimension represented by the questions which present the first three requirements. These requirements deal with how the value is selected and developed. Rath, Harmin and Simon label these as the elements of the process of "choosing." The second dimension is the rhetorical dimension. The rhetorical dimension is clarified by requirements 4 and 5 that query how the valuer thinks, feels and expresses the value. The theorists label these requirements simply as "prizing." The third dimension is the behavioral dimension that asks, in requirements 6 and 7, if the value is determining behaviors. Rath, Harmin and Simon call this process "acting." The following figure represents the dimensions and the seven requirements:

THE PROCESS OF VALUING

SEVEN REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A VALUE

If the following questions can be answered affirmatively, a value exists.

DEVELOPMENTAL DIMENSION	1. Was the value chosen freely?
"Choosing"	2. Was the value chosen from a range of alternatives?
	3. Was the value chosen after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative?
RHETORICAL DIMENSION	4. Is the value prized and cherished?
"Prizing"	5. Is the value expressed and affirmed?
BEHAVIORAL DIMENSION	6. Is the value guiding behavior?
"Acting"	7. Is the value repeatedly guiding behavior?

The process of valuing paradigm is a definitional theory that CEDA debaters may find applicable to some value oriented propositions. The following two examples are an attempt to simplistically illustrate how the process of valuing might apply.

The Cross Examination Debate Association came close to selecting the following topic for its proposition for debate during the second semester 1982-83. "Resolved: that the Puritan work ethic has been an overemphasized American value." A central issue in debating this proposition would undoubtedly be whether or not American workers valued the "Puritan work ethic." After defining the "Puritan work ethic" the debate advocate could apply "the process of valuing" paradigm to determine if the value was extant. If the affirmative advocate could prove that the "Puritan work ethic" did not fit the seven requirements for the existence of a value, then the inference could be drawn and developed that the "Puritan work ethic has been an overemphasized American value."

The second semester 1982-83 CEDA debate topic dealt with "individual rights of privacy" being "more important than any other constitutional right." Some teams asserted that privacy was an important value to the American public because a Harris Poll presented that result based on their interviews. With the application of the seven requirements for the process of valuing, it is apparent that the public opinion polling technique only fits one of the seven requirements. The polling technique measures the fifth requirement of expressing and affirming, but it does not measure the other requirements. Consequently the negative can argue that the Harris Poll is insignificant in the debate because it does not adequately establish individual rights of privacy as a value that meets the requirements of the process of valuing.

There is some controversy among behavioral scientists regarding the process of valuing concept. Some theorists feel the process of valuing is too stringent. They submit that the seven requirements are so extensive that the concept restrictively narrows the concept of valuing. This is precisely the intent of Rath, Harmin and Simon however, as they wish to imbue the label "value" with a substantial referent. They believe that things are often called "values" that are "value indicators" that do not meet all the criteria.[8] A list of "value indicators" includes: "goals or purposes, aspirations, attitudes, interests, feelings, beliefs and convictions, activities, and worries, problems and obstacles."[9] A "value indicator" may lead to the growth of a true value, but should not be confused with the true value that meets all seven criteria. This theory is particularly relevant to value debate since debaters have tended to label any sort of value indicator as a "value."

NOTES

[1]Louis E. Raths, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney B. Simon, Values and Teaching, (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1978), p. 8.

[2]Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality, (New York: John Wiley, 1970), p. 93.

[3]Abraham H. Maslow, The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, (New York: Viking Press, 1971), p. 110.

[4]Raths, p. 8.

[5]Raths, pp. 26-27.

[6]Raths, p. 27.

[7]Raths, p. 28.

[8]Raths, p. 29.

[9]Ibid.