



A Study on the Hierarchy of Values

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ABSTRACT: I attempt to look into the issue of the ranks of values comprehensively and progressively. Anti-values can be classified into the following six categories by ascending order: (1) the act of destroying the earth-of annihilating humankind and all other living organisms; (2) the act of mass killing of people by initiating a war or committing treason; (3) the act of murdering or causing death to a human being; (4) the act of damaging the body of a human being; (5) the act of greatly harming society; (6) all other crimes not covered by the above. Higher values can be classified into the following five categories in descending rank: (1) absolute values such as absolute truth, absolute goodness, absolute beauty and absolute holiness; (2) the act of contributing to the development and happiness of humankind; (3) the act of contributing to the nation or the state; (4) the act of contributing to the regional society; (5) the act of cultivating oneself and managing one's family well. Generally, people tend to pursue happiness more eagerly than goodness, but because goodness is the higher value than happiness, we ought to pursue goodness more eagerly. In helping people to get the right sense of values and to internalize it, education and enlightenment of citizens based on the guidance of conscience rather than compulsion will be highly effective.

1. Classification of Values

I will discuss what kinds of values exist, before talking about their hierarchy. Walter Goodnow Everett classified values into the following eight categories; (1) economic values, (2) bodily values, (3) value of recreation, (4) value of association, (5) character values, (6) aesthetic values, (7) intellectual values, (8) religious values.

Everett's classification does not cover all the values in our life. To this we can add political values, social values, legal values, cultural values moral values, educational values, scholastic values, industrial values, athletic values, values of life, medical values, values of language, technical values and emotional values. In addition to values in our life, things have natural values, whether they are directly related to us humans or not.

The nature system such as the universe, the solar system, the earth is composed of time, space and material, and is the most basic world of existence which provides living organisms with the base for their existence. If there is no land, water, air or light, the universe will become an empty space, in which no life can exist.

The nature system generates living organisms, letting them grow or become extinct, by physically sustaining its constant state or changing itself, or chemically combining or dissolving its various elements. The stars are moving, exploding or transforming themselves in the apparently boundless universe by unmeasurable mysterious power. The stars have limitless power and values over the humans as well as all the other living organisms on the earth. These stars have values of sustenance and change, values of combination and dissolution, values of conservation and generation, and values of standstill and movement. Weight, energy, objects and light realize various values.

Thus the nature system has many values which constitute the base for the existence of the humans. Values can be classified as follows by their qualities; (1) individual values and social values, (2) natural values and artificial values, (3) physical values and mental values, (4) instrumental values and intrinsic values, (5) temporary values and permanent values, (6) exclusive values and universal values, (7) lower values and higher values, (8) unproductive values and productive values, (9) active values and inactive values, (10) personal values and impersonal values, (11) theoretical values and practical values, (12) relative values and absolute values, and so on.

Values are indeed manifold and countless, and values in our life are interconnected. For example, artistic values and social values depend on physical values, because we cannot do artistic or social activities without our lives or bodies. Science, education and political activities depend, more or less, on economic values, because we need some degree of economic support for our social life. Conversely, we know that intellectual values and political values influence our economy as some remarkable talent or excellent policy can make a home or a nation prosperous.

2. Hierarchy of Values

In this chapter, I will think about the hierarchy of various values in this world, that is, the question of what is the highest value and what is the lowest value.

First of all, M. Scheler(1874-1928) presented the following five principles in deciding the rank of values;

First, the longer the value lasts, the higher it is. For example, while the value of pleasure lasts for the duration of the feeling of pleasure, the mental value remains after the disappearance of the circumstances. (timelessness);

Second, the harder it is to reduce the quality of the value as its carrier (Werttrager) divides or the harder it is to increase the quality of the value as its carrier enlarges, the higher the value is. For example, while the value of material goods reduces as the goods divide, the value of mental goods is indivisible and not related to the number of people concerned. (indivisibility);

Third, the higher value becomes the base for the lower value. The fewer other values the value has as its base, the higher it is.(independence);

Fourth, there is an intrinsic relationship between the rank of the value and the depth of satisfaction from its realization. In other words, the deeper the satisfaction connected to the value is, the higher the value is. For example, the physical satisfaction is strong but shallow. On the contrary, the satisfaction from artistic meditation is a deep experience. The depth of satisfaction is not related to its strength. (depth of satisfaction);

Fifth, the less the sense of the value is related to the existence of its carrier, the higher the value is. For example, the value of pleasure has significance in relation to the sense of

sensuality. The value of life exists for those with the sense of life, but the moral value exists absolutely and independently from those who feel it. (absoluteness).

In accordance with the above principles, Scheler classified the values into the following four categories (from the bottom to the top); (1) the value of pleasure and displeasure (the emotional value), (2) the value of the sense of life (and welfare as a subsidiary value to it), (3) the mental value (perception, beauty, justice), (4) the value of holiness.

Further he divided the mental value into the value of beauty, the value of justice, and the value of perceiving the truth. The value of holiness was strictly distinguished from all the other values, which were thought to be given as the symbols of the value of holiness.

Thus Scheler suggested five principles, by which the ranks of values can be decided, and presented four levels of values. This idea is very instrumental in deciding the ranks of values. He placed the durable mental values higher than the temporary physical values, put the mental goods higher than the material goods, placed the satisfaction from artistic meditation above the material satisfaction, appreciated the value of the sense of life more highly than the emotional value of pleasure and displeasure, and placed the mental value of perception, beauty, and justice higher than the value of the sense of life. This is an excellent idea that can offer the right sense of values for some contemporary people with the mistaken sense of values.

Scheler's idea of values was succeeded by Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950), who left a number of creative papers on this subject. Emphasizing that we just started the study of values, he said that it was very difficult to decide on the ranks of values. He also said that the hierarchy of values was formed objectively and never changed.

He said that the analysis of values clearly showed difference in the ranks of values in a small range. For example, the love of neighbors (Nachstenliebe) is higher in terms of quality than honesty, and the love of remote people (Fernstenliebe) is higher than the love of neighbors. The love of persons (Personliche Liebe) is higher than the love of neighbors or the love of remote people. Likewise, courage is higher than self-denial. Credit and Faith are higher than courage. The virtue of giving (Schenkende Tugend) and good personality are higher than credit and faith. He suggested goodness (das Gute), nobility (das Edle), fullness (die Fuelle) and purity (die Reinheit) as fundamental ethical values.

He also talked about the relationship between the height and the strength of the value. He said that the higher value was weak, but the lower value was strong. The higher value is structurally complex, but the lower value is elementary. Something elementary is strong. The betrayal of the lower value is a more serious sin than the betrayal of the higher value. The realization of the higher value is more valuable than that of the lower value. For example, murder is the most serious crime, but the respect for others' lives is not the highest virtue. The property is the value lower than kindness, but the infringement of the property is more severely condemned than unfriendliness. The betrayal of the lower value is shameful (schimpflich), but the realization of the lower value is taken for granted. Even if one betrays the higher value, he (or she) will not lose honor. However, if one realizes the higher value, he (or she) will be praised. Thus the height of the value and its strength are different from each other.

Here are examples in which Hartmann arranged values by their height. He arranged honesty, integrity, the love of neighbors, unconditional faith, the love of remote people and the virtue of giving by their height. Honesty is the lowest among these and the virtue of giving is the highest. Furthermore, the anti-values corresponding to these values can be illustrated as follows; dishonesty (for example theft), lie, the lack of love for neighbors, inability for unconditional faith, the lack of love for remote people, the lack of the virtue of

giving. The strength is in the same order. That is, dishonest is the strongest anti-value, while the lack of the virtue of giving is the weakest. Theft as dishonesty is a crime and the lowest anti-value. A lie is not a crime but it is related to honor, while the lack of love is not a matter of honor. Inability for unconditional faith is just a moral defect, and the lack of love for remote people or the lack of the virtue of giving is not a defect at all.

Bearing in mind these ideas, I will look into the issue of the ranks of values more comprehensively and more progressively. Hartmann's remarks that the higher value is weak and the lower value is strong can be appreciated as grasping values ontologically. This can easily be understood if we get to know his idea of layered existence in which he understood the world in layers and divided the world of existence into four levels, which constituted four layers of existence(Seinsschicht).

He said that there were (1)the layer of mental existence, (2)the layer of conscious existence, (3)the layer of live existence and (4)the layer of physical existence. In the layer of mental existence are the humans, in the layer of conscious existence are the higher animals, in the layer of live existence are the plants, and in the layer of physical existence are the lifeless things.

(1) The humans include all the four layers of existence in themselves and are understood as concrete objects assembling these in a peculiar way.

(2) The higher animals are the aggregates of the layers of physical, live and conscious existence.

(3) The plants are the aggregates of the layers of physical and live existence.

(4) The lifeless things include only the layer of physical existence.

The layer of physical existence is the lowest but most basic layer of existence on which all the living organisms in the world live. If this layer of physical existence is destroyed, all the living organisms as well as all the precious mental and cultural heritage of the mankind will disappear at the same time. Therefore, the conservation of the layer of physical existence is very important.

Hartmann said that murder was the most serious crime, but more review is required on the act of murder. As for murder, there are the act of individual murder by an offender, the mass destruction of humans by a war, or, in the modern era, the act of annihilating the mankind as well as all the living organisms in the world by nuclear weapons. Considering the destructive power of nuclear weapons held by some countries, which can turn the surface of the earth into ashes, the act of provoking a nuclear war or that of destroying the earth is the most serious crime. Thus the act of destroying the earth and annihilating the mankind as well as all the living organisms is the most serious crime and the most dreadful anti-value.

The second lowest anti-value is the killing of a number of people by the crime against the state or the nation. The nation states are among the largest organizations made by humans in terms of geographical size or the number of people.

The act of a ruler who, by using a large organization as the state, initiates a war and causes the nation to lose its lives and properties and suffer from the loss of the war, is clearly the crime against the nation or the people. To drive the nation toward a war under the pretext of the prosperity for the nation or the state and kill the people of another state is clearly the low anti-value as an act of genocide. In the past, belligerent kings or rulers, who were very good at martial art or military strategy and frequently invaded other states, were often

praised as heroes and respected as objects of adoration, but that should be considered the mistaken sense of value. The person who defends the nation and the state from the invasion of another nation or state, is of course a hero and patriot whose patriotism and courage should be highly appreciated.

The act of treason against the nation and the state, which leads to the loss of a number of lives of the people, is also a very low anti-value. This kind of serious crime against the state is the act of destroying a group of values of life and the more comprehensive act of killing or injuring than that of killing or injuring an individual. The serious crime against the state becomes directly or indirectly the act of destroying many values. It destroys values of life, bodily values as well as artistic, religious, political, economic, cultural, social and industrial values.

The third lowest anti-value is the act of murdering a human. The act of murdering or causing to death a human is the act of destroying the life and body of the human and is heavily punishable up to death penalty under the Korean Criminal Code like the crime against the state.

The next is the act of damaging the human body through violence and other means. The act of damaging the life or the body, which is the base for human existence, is clearly the low anti-value.

The low anti-value next to the act of damaging the human body is the act of destroying the public security and order and harming a number of people such as arson, traffic violation, etc. In addition to these, there are numerous immoral crimes including crimes relating to the properties, which are basic and essential for human life, such as theft, fraud, etc.

The above anti-values can be classified into the following six categories by the ranks from the lowest one:

- (1) The act of destroying the earth, the act of annihilating the mankind and all the other living organisms
- (2) The act of mass killing of people by initiating a war or committing treason
- (3) The act of murdering or causing to death a human
- (4) The act of damaging the body of a human
- (5) The act of greatly harming the society
- (6) All the other crimes not covered by the above

When we are preoccupied by the evil, ugly, dirty anti-values which are committed by humans, it is easy to have prejudices or misperceptions that everybody in this world seems to be wrong and evil. Those who usually handle offenders in the court are prone to suspect others as offenders.

On the contrary, if we observe the humans and the society, we cannot ignore the fact that the human has a dual aspect. E. Durkheim(1858-1917), a French positive sociologist, advocated the dual nature of the human. While the human is a selfish being with desires, he(or she) is also a moral, religious being. While the human is a being of sense and sensual thinking, he(or she) is also a being of reason and conceptual thinking. There is a confrontation between holiness and filthiness, and there is a duality of the individual and the society. There is a confrontation between selfishness and morals in the human mind. In

the society, there are good persons and bad ones, good deeds and crimes, and justice and injustice.

Now I proceed to think about right, good, beautiful, holy and wonderful higher values.

First of all, I will think about absolute values as the highest values. Plato(B.C.427-347) said that there were absolute justice, absolute beauty and absolute goodness, and there were absolute greatness(as the essence or nature of everything), health and power. The above-mentioned absolute justice, absolute beauty and absolute goodness can be considered absolute values, but at the present time truth in logic, goodness in morality, beauty in art and holiness in religion are generally considered absolute values. Thus it can be said that absolute truth, absolute goodness, absolute beauty and absolute holiness constitute the system of absolute values as the highest values.

On the highest goodness or absolute goodness, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) said that the highest goodness as the inevitable highest goal of the will as morally prescribed was the genuine object of practical reason. He also said that the highest absolute goodness could be found in the will of the rational being. It would be difficult to realize absolute goodness, which could be found only in the will of the rational being. Absolute truth, absolute beauty and absolute holiness could be found in the will or the mind of the wise, artistic or noble being.

The second highest values are the acts of guiding the mankind to the right road or giving happiness to them. The acts of Confucius, Buddha, Jesus Christ or Socrates belong to this category. The acts of Edison, Beethoven or the sculptor who made Venus of Milo also belong to it. These people, through the religious, educational, scientific or artistic activities, saved the mankind, taught them the immortal truth, told them the lofty ideal or gave them happiness of artistic meditation.

The third highest values are the acts of contributing to the nation or the state. Aristotle(B.C.384-332) said that, although it was worthwhile to realize the personal goal, it was more beautiful and nobler to realize the goal of the nation or that of the city state, and he added that it was this goal that we studied scientifically, which was in a sense what politics pursued. It is more worthwhile and more valuable to do good things for the nation or the state than to do good things for an individual.

The fourth highest values are the acts of contributing to the development of the village or the work place or the school, etc. Although the acts contribute only to the small society or group, not covering the wide range of the nation or the state, they are also very valuable. The acts are those of helping others, or contributing to the regional society, the work place or the school, but basically it is necessary to observe the rules of the society, the work place or the school.

Lower than the above, the next category of values in the hierarchy of values are the acts of cultivating oneself and govern a household. It is very important to carry out the virtues of self-denial, moderation, or perseverance.

Socrates(B.C. 470-399) said that the virtue of a man was to govern the state well and the virtue of a woman was to govern the family well. That was only because the man mainly did external activities and the woman mainly did activities relating to the family at that time. It is of course the virtue for a man to govern the family well. In the teachings of Confucious, cultivating oneself was the basic value and the value of benefiting the world was put in the highest place, and in between there were the values of managing well the family and the state.

The above-mentioned values can be classified into the following five categories by the ranks from the highest one:

- (1) absolute values such as absolute truth, absolute goodness, absolute beauty, and absolute holiness
- (2) the act of contributing to the development and happiness of the mankind
- (3) the act of contributing to the nation or the state
- (4) the act of contributing to the regional society, social organizations, the work place, the school etc.
- (5) the act of cultivating oneself and managing the family well.

According to this hierarchy of values, we can easily understand that the act of benefiting oneself is the most basic value and the act of benefiting neighbors, the state, the nation or the mankind is the higher value.

However, as the human has the greedy, selfish and evil character as well as the moral, religious, good and holy character, he or she is often inclined to pursue the lower value and not to pursue the higher value. Driven by the mistaken sense of values, the human often pursues the lower values such as emotional pleasure, the wealth and shuns the moral or religious values. As Aristotle said earlier, people believe that a certain degree of virtues are well enough, but they endlessly pursue the wealth, money, power and reputation.

Money and the wealth must be the basic things for our survival and life, but these are not the highest value but the lower value. Because the moral, artistic, religious values are higher than the economic value, and, moreover, truth, goodness, beauty and holiness are the highest values, we ought to pursue such higher values.

Yet because the human has the very strong emotional desire and the desire to possess, he or she is inclined to endlessly pursue the wealth, money and power rather than the virtues or the public welfare. Thus we first ought to make efforts to become a righteous and virtuous human and pursue the wealth, money or power in a just way.

Immanuel Kant's remarks "der bestirnte Himmel ueber mir und das moralische Gesetz in mir" show us his firm Western moral spirit. Kant clearly said that the good was different from pleasure, and he also said that the highest goodness was the genuine object of practical reason and the highest virtue as the first element of the highest goodness constituted moralism, but happiness constituted the second element of the highest goodness. Such words show us which one of goodness and happiness is higher as the value. Generally speaking, people tend to pursue happiness more eagerly than goodness, but because goodness is the higher value than happiness, we ought to pursue goodness more eagerly.

People generally pursue their own happiness and want others to be perfect, but they ought to pursue their own perfection and others' happiness. Because people want others to be perfect for the formers' own happiness, they blame others for the formers' unhappiness.

We ought to have goodness as our highest goal and others' happiness as our goal. Yet I do not mean that we should not mind our just happiness at all. In the past, the natural desire of the human was often considered bad and not to be pursued, while complete self-denial was considered a virtue. That should be corrected in the modern era.

For example, the moral value is higher than the economic value, but the desire to be rich or work diligently should not be regarded as unjust. We know the words by King Solomon or Saint Paul on the wealth and diligence. Thomas Aquinas(1225-1274) annotated the thesis by Saint Paul that those who do not work should not eat.

R. Baxter(1615-1691), a typical British Puritan, considered the wealth to be very dangerous and seductive but the writings of Puritans said that taking a rest with the wealth, laziness and lust caused by the enjoyment of the wealth, especially the deviation from the efforts for a holy life should be morally rejected and the waste of time is a serious sin. After all Protestantism did not view self-denial and the acquisition of the property as contradictory to each other.

Protestantism taught that people should work together with diet, vegetarianism, and cold shower. It is well known that as a result of the pioneer spirit and diligence of the Protestants, many countries or regions where many Protestants live have become economically advanced or rich. There is a saying that a miserly rich man is better than a generous poor man, which is because the poor man does not have the wealth to help others with. Thus, in this modern era, we should duly realize our just desire while controlling our unjust desire, and contribute to the prosperity and development of the individual, the family, the society, the state, the nation and the mankind. By duly realizing the sexual desire, appetite, and desire to possess, we can give birth to a human, help the human existence, and enrich the human life.

Therefore, we ought to keep in mind that promoting other's happiness, cultivating our good character, duly fulfilling our duties and contributing to the prosperity and development of the society, the state, the nation, and the mankind are the higher values.

3. Conclusion

I classified the anti-values into six categories and the higher values into five categories, all with the ranks.

The word "value" has originated from the economic field, but the value is different from the price. It is difficult to convert the value into the price, and it is not easy to put the price on life. The price is the exchange value and it is different from time to time, from place to place, from people to people, and is constantly changeable.

No price or the cheap price does not necessarily mean no value or the small value. For example, we do not put the price on air, but it is very valuable for us. Water or tap water is cheap, but it is essential for human life and has the almost boundless value for us. Land, the sun, and light also have the boundless and essential value for the existence of humans, animals, and plants. Therefore, the air pollution, the water pollution, and the destruction of the ecological system are very grave anti-values, threatening the existence of the humans and other living organisms.

We now face not only the environmental pollution but also difficult problems such as human alienation and unemployment, the depletion of natural resources, crimes, drug addiction, the disintegration of the family, the deviation of youths and the mistreatment of the elderly, the inequality of distribution, the threat of weapons of mass-destruction, the disruption of the sense of values, etc.

The solution of these problems would require not only the individual efforts but also the efforts and cooperation of social organizations, government agencies, and, furthermore, international organizations.

In helping people to get the right sense of values and internalize it, education and enlightenment of citizens based on the guidance of conscience rather than compulsion will be highly effective.

Bearing in mind the ideas of some scholars on the classification and hierarchy of values, I have tried to look into the issue of the ranks of values more comprehensively and more progressively. The anti-values can be classified into the following six categories by the ranks from the lowest one; (1) The act of destroying the earth, the act of annihilating the mankind and all the other living organisms, (2) the act of mass killing of people by initiating a war or committing treason, (3) the act of murdering or causing to death a human, (4) the act of damaging the body of a human, (5) the act of greatly harming the society, (6) all the other crimes not covered by the above. Then, the higher values can be classified into the following five categories by the ranks from the highest one ; (1) absolute values such as absolute truth, absolute goodness, absolute beauty, and absolute holiness, (2) the act of contributing to the development and happiness of the mankind, (3) the act of contributing to the nation or the state, (4) the act of contributing to the regional society, (5) the act of cultivating oneself and managing the family well. Generally speaking, people tend to pursue happiness more eagerly than goodness, but because goodness is the higher value than happiness, we ought to pursue goodness more eagerly. In helping people to get the right sense of values and internalize it, education and enlightenment of citizens based on the guidance of conscience rather than compulsion will be highly effective.