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The Expression of Value in Political Documents

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The Expression of Value in Political Documents
Klaus Krippendorff

This inquiry sets forth and tests in a preliminary way a logical typology for the expression of value, whether implicit or explicit, in texts, in search of a syntax of value expression.

“Value” usually has the status of an explanatory concept according to which a variety of purposive behaviors can be described consistently. Political science, for example, uses objective measures of the strength of values held by politicians and others, assessments of the effectiveness of values in governing decision process and observations of how value sharing and institutional developments. But all of these exercises are difficult because of the abstract nature of the concept “value” and the divergent explanatory roles that values may play.

In a recent cross-cultural study of the values of political leaders, these difficulties became a major stumbling block. The project used a variety of research techniques: interviews with political leaders, surveys, a study of historical instances of decision making and content analysis of pertinent local documents. The last was designed to extract explicitly or implicitly expressed values from major governmental pronouncements, policy speeches, transcribed interviews, records of local meetings and reports and editorials carried in the mass media. The application of this investigative technique presupposes the ability to interpret verbal utterances in terms of some relevant set of values.

The commitment to scientific method requires, among other things, that the analytical procedure be reliable; i.e., the resulting interpretation of verbal data must be replicable. This requirement in turn demands some degree of formalization of analytical procedure. But to decide how and in what language such formalization is best accomplished may be premature. Loose instructions to human judges usually fail to satisfy reliability requirements, whereas strict and detailed instructions often lead to excessive expenditures of time.

In any case, the problem of formulating verbal instructions for trained human judges (or writing computer programs for text analysis) presupposes some knowledge of how values are expressed and how they may be discoverable in transcribed speeches or written documents. Such knowledge would amount in fact to a theory of valuational assertions, which in turn might serve as a hypothetical construct for making the desired value inferences. The problem of designing an analytical tool for identifying the values expressed in transcribed speeches or documents is therefore one of formulating a replicable procedure that a) is based on an adequate theory of how values find expression in verbal data and b) serves as a basis for an attempt to map the assertions of a given text into a scheme of relevant value terms.

A few basic approaches to the identification of values have been used in the past. There is first *symbol analysis*, for which the work of Pool and associates may be considered representative.¹ Symbol analysis simply assesses whether or not members of a specified list of abstract nouns (representing, for instance, such political symbols as “freedom,” “democracy” or “bill of rights,” are present or absent in a given text. When such a procedure is to be used to analyze values, the assumption must be made that single words are direct and unequivocal representations of held values and that they can therefore serve as value terms in the above sense. The advantage of great analytical simplicity is seriously diminished by the loss of structurally more complex expressive forms, as will become clearer below.

A second approach may be termed *evaluative component analysis*, which stems from Osgood’s work on affective meaning,² which has been used systematically by Holsti, *et al.*³ Evaluative component analysis views each individual word as a vector in a space of several affective - evaluational dimensions. Certain weighting procedures that are based on the principle of congruity allow the computation of scores for evaluative assertions and for whole texts of which the individual words are members. While this approach abolishes the one-to-one representation that symbol analysis requires-and is indeed able to consider certain relations between the constituent words of assertions-it has the handicap that the relations, being either associative or dissociative, are too primitive to serve as a basis for a theory of how values are expressed in verbal material.

The occurrence of isolated symbols in a text or their relative frequency has always been interpreted in terms of some preference and perhaps in terms of some motivation on the part of the author. Affective associations and dissociations between concepts manifest in the text have similarly been explained in motivational terms. But the results of both types of analysis seem inadequate in the light of the particular definition of value that emerged in the comparative study of leadership values. Barton writes:

Values will be defined here as general and stable dispositions of individuals verbalized by them or inferred by the researcher, involving preference or a sense of obligation.⁴

Jacob later emphasized the normative component of such dispositions:

This study defines values operationally as “normative standards by which human beings are influenced in their choice among the alternative courses of action which they perceive.” Values so conceived refer to feelings of obligation or duty and to convictions of what is right or wrong, good or bad, legitimate or not legitimate.⁵

Quite obviously, the expression of values in the above defined sense requires a more complex syntax than symbol analysis and evaluative component analysis are willing to consider. Both these types of analysis seem inadequate for identifying values that are, for example, implicitly expressed in imperatives or evaluative judgments. Even explicit commitments may escape such analyses.

One analytical approach to value analysis that recognizes more complex expressive structures of value-laden statements has been proposed by Jacob.⁶ Central to this approach is the notion of “clue-words” that serve as indicators of value-laden statements. For example, to identify value-laden statements in political communications clue-words are grouped into those connoting obligation and responsibility (e.g., dedicate, require, swear), those connoting approval-disapproval (e.g., admire, correct, fail, lawful, virtue), those connoting aspiration (e.g., aim, strive for), and those connoting necessity (e.g., compel, essential, must). By making the identification of value-laden statements conditional on the presence of individual clue-words in a text, the assumption is made that the syntactic structure of value statements can be ignored during the identification process; i.e., it is assumed that certain word constituents of a statement, the clue-words, sufficiently determine whether or not a value is expressed in a given statement. So far the approach has not been developed sufficiently to specify the nature of the relationship between a clue-word and the value toward which it presumably points. That is to say syntactic structure of the expressions within which values are presumably realized has not yet been investigated.

A fourth approach to value analysis, or more specifically to the identification of value-laden statements in a text, was developed during the Second International Roundtable of the International Studies of Values in Politics.⁷ It bypasses the problem of specifying the structures of value-laden verbal expressions by relying heavily on a trained judge’s interpretative ability. For each statement the judge is asked to answer the following questions:

- 1) Does the statement describe an action, situation or object in value-laden terms?
- 2) Does the statement propose a course of action considered obligatory, desirable or approved as legitimate?
- 3) Does the statement indicate a desirable (or undesirable) end?
- 4) Does the statement set forth a criterion or norm in terms of which an action or object is evaluated?⁸

It was the consensus of the roundtable that a positive answer to any of these four questions would fairly reliably identify a value-laden expression or statement.

Procedure

To test empirically whether the last two procedures, the clue-word approach, and the four-question approach, do indeed reliably identify and retrieve value-laden statements from a longer text, a research assistant was

asked to apply the instructions as accurately as possible to a given text. Then the student was asked to isolate those statements that could be considered value-laden on entirely intuitive grounds. The differences among the three means of identification were great and it was felt that a more thorough examination of the reasons for these differences was needed.

Toward this end two students, one East Indian and one American, were instructed to identify on entirely intuitive grounds and copy down those statements that implicitly or explicitly expressed some value which the author of the document presumably held. The students were also asked to give a reason why the statement was chosen and to indicate what value they thought the statements expressed in each case. The author then attempted to categorize the value statements thus obtained, together with their intuitive interpretation, according to forms of value expression. The verbal data utilized in this inquiry stem from two speeches by President Johnson; a public address by the late Prime Minister Nehru; a section of the Yugoslav constitution; a statement by the Polish Party Leader Gomulka and a large number of editorial statements in local and national newspapers.

Results

The value-laden statements as identified and interpreted by the subjects did not, of course, provide the basis for a unique typology. More evidence, particularly from content analysts in different countries, is needed before a typology such as the one suggested below can be regarded as cross-culturally comparable. The results should be interpreted as a first step in this direction, or as providing a set of working tools that may subsequently be modified and simplified as experience accumulates.

One general scheme that developed out of the informants' reasoning and which seems highly significant for any formalization of the required procedure suggests the grouping of the various value statements into three main types, distinguished on the basis of three kinds of hypothetical constructs on which the value inference rests:

Type A: Expressions the retrieval and interpretation of which require only an expertise in language; i.e., the subject's ability to identify the expressed values relies only on his knowledge of the language's syntax, semantics and affective meanings. Expressions in this class are direct verbalizations of standards, goals and evaluative criteria.

Type B: Expressions the retrieval and interpretation of which requires, in addition to knowledge of the language, some kind of logic of evaluative reasoning on the basis of which relevant values may be inferred. Expressions in this and the following class are indirect verbalizations of standards, goals and evaluative criteria or implicit valuational assertions. However, particular to this class is the assumption of some form of rationality concerning value judgments.

Type C: Expressions the retrieval and interpretation of which requires not only an expertise in the language and in the logic of evaluative reasoning, but also knowledge of the particular situation in which the statement was uttered. The interpretation of expressions in this class presupposes-to use the term of George⁹-the construction of a model of the situation within which an utterance appears value-laden in a very concrete sense.

The breakdown of these three main types into more specific types may illustrate the significance of this scheme.

Declarative value expressions, A (1). These are explicit statements claiming affirmative or committal relations between a particular goal, principle or standard and some person, social group or even something like mankind as a whole. There tends to be no object of evaluation. Some typical relations between a value and its possessor are:

- “ . . . committed to . . . ”
- “ . . . obliged to . . . ”
- “ . . . will strive for . . . ”
- “ . . . is the principle of . . . ”
- “ . . . have.... as goal ”

An examination of the English use of terms denoting possessive relations revealed that only a subset of such terms appears in declarative value expression. For example, possessive relations referred to by "... have ...", "... look like ...", "... possesses ...", etc., do not convey the sense of determination characteristic of declarative value expressions. Then too, possessive relations conveying a sense of determination alone (of which a list could easily be compiled) cannot serve as indicators of declarative value expressions. For instance, if both terms of the binary relation refer to persons or social groups, the statement may express elementary social relations as in "A is committed to B". Finally, if the speaker is not an asserted member of the said holder of the value--as, for example, Johnson: "the Viet Cong are determined to . . ."--the statement may become one of belief, leaving out the declarative element.

Hence, declarative value expressions state explicitly a relation of determination between a holder of a value with which the author of the statement identifies and some behavior, principle or standard of evaluation. The holder of a value may sometimes not be stated explicitly. In the case "Q is the highest goal," the author can usually be identified as the value holder, or as a representative thereof.

Expressions concerning value relevance, A (2). Statements of this type explicitly assert the relative relevance of principles or standards of evaluation for a particular situation or object of evaluation. Political speeches often attempt to define a particular situation or action in terms of the relevant criteria that are to apply. For example, Johnson's "we fight for value and a principle (explained earlier in his speech) rather than territory or colonies" explicitly asserts the relative relevance of two possible motives for the war in Vietnam. Situations of value conflict are always prone to produce expressions concerning the relevance of particular values to concrete actions, states of affairs, etc. For example, the discussion of social responsibility versus profit as criteria for judging mass media performances or the discussion of free enterprise versus planned production as conflicting principles of economic organization tend to be reducible to the form:

Value 1 is more relevant to behavior X than is Value 2.

Thus, expressions concerning value relevance tend to rank asserted values in the light of a particular action, behavior or object of evaluation.

The particular linguistic forms denoting relations of greater or lesser relevance are numerous, and so are the grammatical forms of such expressions. Therefore, no attempt has been made to compile a list of them at this point.

Attributive value expressions, A (3). These are statements in which some behavior, object or state of affairs is explicitly value-laden by association with certain evaluative attributes. For example:

"Our army is bold, strong and courageous"
"The great land reform..."
"The fascist government..."

In each case certain adjectives (common meaning terms in the evaluative assertion analysis of Osgood, *et al.*¹⁰), the affective meaning of which remains relatively invariant throughout a culture, attribute some value to an object and may render the latter as highly valued ideas or principles that may be operative as standards for decisions.

Instrumental value expressions, B (1). Statements of this kind propose or evaluate some action under control of, or at least identified with the author, in the light of possible consequences or aims that are assertedly connected with that action. The connections between action and consequence are means-ends relations; i.e., they are not conceived as logically necessary but as potentially empirically verifiable. A few typical means-ends relations are:

"...in order to..."
"...is a factor in bringing about..."
"...is instrumental in..."
"...will bring about..."

The scheme of instrumental value expressions includes a) a specific situation or condition under which b) a particular action with which the author typically identifies is conceived as being c) instrumentally linked to an empirical pre-requisite in achieving d) a certain end.

As said above, the identification of the expressed value in such a scheme presupposes--and this is not required in value expressions of type A--some logic of evaluative reasoning over and above expertise in language. In the case of instrumental value expressions, the logic of evaluative reasoning stems from a decision-making rationale in situations in which consequences of decisions can be evaluated. Particularly, in order to infer an implicitly expressed value from instrumental statements, the assumption must be made that a speaker will propose or endorse actions together with their asserted consequences only if the latter further his or some common interest, either reaching or at least approaching some accepted goal. On the basis of this hypothetical construct, explicitly stated consequences of certain actions are identifiable as implicitly valued by a speaker, and this to the extent that the speaker identifies himself with the proposed action and to the extent that the valued consequence is causally linked to that action.

The hypothetical construct required to identify values in instrumental expressions further suggests viewing values as nodes in a network of asserted instrumental links. The direction of these instrumental links then points to increasingly central values toward which the behavior may ultimately be oriented.

Justifying value expressions, B (2). While instrumental value expressions may be said to justify choices of action on the basis of an empirical link between the action and its valued consequences; justifying value expressions, on the other hand, attempt to establish a cognitive (neither causal nor empirically verifiable) link between actions, behavior or states of affairs and some more abstract concept, principle or ideal. Such relations as:

"...because..."
"...on the basis of ..."
"...that is why..."
"...in the name of..."

express such cognitive links, which all boil down to showing some consistency between some object of evaluation, behavior or concrete situation and the more generally accepted principle, standard or purpose.

The logic of evaluative reasoning required to interpret justifying value expressions seems to be based on the assumption that current or proposed behavior is rendered acceptable if and to the extent its consistency with some other general value or standard can be shown. Conversely, in statements expressing such consistencies, the more abstract concepts that are utilized in rendering the action or object of justification with which the author identifies himself, more acceptable, must then be assumed to be operating values. Hence this hypothesized transfer of acceptability along lines of expressed consistency becomes a prerequisite for identifying justifications as value-laden statements and serves as a theoretical base for identifying the values expressed in such statements.

Exemplifying value expressions, B (3). Statements in this category appear value-laden because of the support they are able to lend to other more abstract themes or principles that may subsequently operate as values. Typical of exemplifying value expressions is that their concrete content is to some extent exchangeable with, or at least generalizable to other contents along the line of projected similarities.

The idea of absolute leadership, for example, is an abstraction that may, in a certain culture, never be explicitly stated as a value but be favorably supported by fairy tales, popular songs or war news and therefore be operative in future situations. Political propaganda often uses historical events to exemplify some valued principle or standard in order to point to desired contemporary interpretations of that principle. Analogies and metaphors are rhetorical categories that refer to the same phenomenon.

Typical of exemplifying value expressions is that some principle, standard or behavior may become a value as particular incidents of that principle appear favorably evaluated. The logic of evaluative reasoning here assumes value transfer from particulars to universals or a generalization of valuations from one object to a second, provided that both can be considered as incidents of a more general principle or idea through which that transfer is accomplished.

The analysis of exemplifying value expressions is made difficult due to the fact that exemplifications of this kind a) hardly ever suggest how abstract the supported value is conceived by the author, and b) characteristically conceal which aspect of a complex expression or theme is subject of the abstraction.

Value expressions by contingency, B (4). It is typical of statements in this category that two or more objects are expressed as being contingent on each other. The logic of evaluative reasoning that applies here assumes that the evaluation of one object generalizes to the other on the basis of the strength of the expressed contingency. For example, in the statement: “a country advances as its people get educated,” “education” alone seems not a goal except when made contingent to a country’s advancement, education of people immediately becomes a value as well. In other examples:

“We realize that human relations are bound irrevocably to human opportunities.”

“India’s independence came in peace.”

“Socialist countries unite peace loving people.”

“Selfish landlords cooperate with corrupt politicians.”

contingency relations may appear as conjunctions, causal relations or relations of unity and membership. Some but not all of the relevant assumptions of the logic of evaluative reasoning that are concerned with value expressions by contingency have found support in psychological theories of association and cognitive interaction.

As stated in the beginning, in Type B value expressions, the hypothetical construct which was termed here “logic of evaluative reasoning” applies after the one called “linguistic ability.” The former provides the basis for value inferences over and above what a language is able to express overtly.

Descriptive value expressions, C (1). Members of this group of value-laden statements give the impression of factual or descriptive statements, yet are value-laden on the basis of some hypothetical construct of the particular situation in which the statement was uttered.

The statement: “Corporations have greater after tax earnings than ever,” for example, does not explicitly express any value. A general logic of evaluative reasoning does not apply, for even the reasoning behind the utterance of such a statement is not made explicit. Knowing, however, that it is a statement by President Johnson about U.S. corporations and that tax policies are to a large extent under his control, such a statement appears clearly value-laden. His attempts to seek support in the U.S. Congress on which the realization of his proposals and subsequently his prestige depends, strongly suggests that he will selectively report only on events the favorable evaluation of which is shared by Johnson, the Congress and those powerful pressure groups involved in its decision making. Under the assumption of such a model of the situation “increase of corporate earnings” appears here as a positive value operating in the situation of the speech. If the statement had been made by some other person or by the same in a different situation, the statement could have been value-neutral or even negative.

Imperative value expressions, C (2). Statements in this category place specific requests, demands, orders or commands on someone other than the speaker. They are based on a rewarding relationship between him and the speaker. Such complementary relationships are typically normative and subject to particular social standards. They must therefore be interpreted as values operating in differentiated situations.

While the content of these demands may be fairly explicit, the motives for formulating and accepting them and the governing principle that is supported by the realization of such imperatives typically have to be inferred. And it is quite obvious that such an inference cannot be drawn on the basis of some logic of evaluative reasoning alone. The inference of values governing a particular social situation from imperative statements asserted in such situations again requires a hypothetical construct of the social situation, perhaps even more complex and the one to be assumed in C (1) type expressions. A description of the kind of assumptions that need to be made when values are intended to be inferred from imperatives would go beyond the scope of this paper.

Rhetorical reversals, C (3). Hypothetical constructs that are adequate for expressions of Type A and B may severely fail to lead to actually expressed values in cases of irony, satire or hypothetical challenges which

characteristically carry their own negation implicitly. Such statements overtly express some value but actually support something quite different, often the opposite of the overtly expressed value.

The nature of the indicators for whether or not a statement is to be read according to Type A or B or interpreted as its rhetorical reversal is not altogether clear. The two students whose interpretations went into this analysis could not easily identify the general pattern of such statements. The linguistic context of value expressions by rhetorical reversals helps to identify only a few statements of this type. A more significant contribution to the correct identification of values in statements of this category is the knowledge about the nature of the situation in which a particular technique of presentation (or propaganda) can be assumed to prevail. The latter implies a certain logic of evaluative reasoning but such knowledge as about the rhetorical habits of the speaker, about the speaker-audience relations and about relevant external factors are indispensable for the interpretation of such statements.

The linguistic structure of statements in this category may be very much like those of Type A and B but their interpretation is typically converse of the results obtained on the basis of hypothetical constructs of these two main types

Concluding Remarks

This preliminary inquiry into the expression of values has already stimulated research and yielded some interesting results. A few comments regarding some problems that emerged and further developments that can be anticipated may therefore be in place. It should be noted that the work of the subjects was not geared toward an analysis of particular values but, rather, was aimed at discovering a “syntax” through which values may become manifest and according to which they may be identified. It was found not too difficult to come to a more abstract characterization of the types of value expressions and the rules of inferences they suggest. Such a formulation is desirable for two reasons: when attempts are made to utilize computers for the processing of text, rules of inferences must be explicit, and, although current methods of value analysis are far removed from this degree of formalization, this ultimate aim suggests at least testable hypotheses for which evidence might be sought systematically. Let, for example,

- I** be an object (action, behavior, situation, abstract conception or ideal) with which the author identifies;
- J, K** are two further objects regardless of the author’s identification;
- P** is an evaluative attribute, and, finally
- V** is a value (goal, principle, standard, ideal) preferred, approved, possessed or not.

Then the types of value expressions may be said to suggest the following ways of identifying **V**, i.e. that which is valued:

- A (1): I is V.
- A (2): in reference to J, V_1 is more relevant than V_2 .
- A (3): J has the property P; therefore $J = V$.
- B (1): under condition K, I leads to J; therefore $J = V$.
- B (2): I is consistent with J; therefore $J = V$.
- B (3): I is a particular incident of J; therefore $J = V$.

etc., but it would be premature to push the point in the absence of research. It seems that the hypothetical constructs according to which values may be inferred do not have the same operational characteristics and pose problems of comparison. For example, attributive value expressions contain values the cognitive role of which is not particularly evident in that expression. Such values may refer more to affective values as opposed to more rational or cognitive values which are manifest in instrumental value expressions. These values may differ in the way they are translated into behavior neglecting such possibly significant differences in developing value profiles, etc., may lead to uninterpretable results.

Moreover, values contained in the various types of expressions may refer to different levels of abstraction and are hence not additive in the algebraic sense. Instrumental value expressions often but not always lead to very concrete goals or material objectives while *justifying* value expressions tend to render quite abstract principles or

ideals. To use an example: someone may support the building of a bridge as a way to a temporary construction job while someone else may support the same because it is consistent with his ideal of progress. Both values are effectively identical in this situation. However, lacking explicit knowledge about the implicit link between the two, the content analyst is hard put to find category schemes to record references on different levels of abstraction.

It is apparent that the values obtained from value-laden statements also differ significantly in their explicitly or implicitly expressed domain of application. A classical example is the political symbol "freedom," which almost everyone is willing to accept as favorable. However, in one country freedom may apply to—among other things—the making of profit by whatever means, while in another country such a use of this principle would be judged as an illegitimate extension.

Finally, this work classified value expressions according to the cognitive maneuvers which the analysis requires, the kind of knowledge which a human observer must supply in the process of making value inferences, and in view of the form which recording instructions might have to take. The resulting types of value expression should thus be regarded as procedural means to facilitate an analysis of the structure of values operating in someone's mind, in particular strata of a population or within a political institution such as a government. To ascertain the adequacy of such a description, a considerable amount of validating evidence is required. Content analysts notoriously avoid explicating what the values that are extracted from documents may mean to the analyst, to the author or in the political culture from which the data were sampled. In the case of the cross-cultural study of leadership values (from which this work stems), values were intended to be used as explanatory concepts accounting for the making of political decisions. Here, a correlation of publicly expressed values with their observed effectiveness seemed to require a weighting of types of expressions. Abstract value references, even though when highly explicit in expression, might be less predictive of the course decisions may take than values implicitly contained in instrumental and justifying assertions which make references to specific actions. If it is merely the intent to ascertain what a leadership believes in or cherishes, other validating evidence may suggest a different emphasis without rejecting the suggested typology.

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