

AXIOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM, HOLISM, AND SYSTEMISM

There are three families of views on the nature of society and its study: individualism, holism, and systemism (Vol. 4, Ch. , Vol 7, Ch.). Every one of these views comes together with its own doctrine(s) on the nature of value and its investigation.

Sociological individualism comes together with axiological subjectivism, or the view that values are in the eyes of the beholder. One influential species of subjectivism is the emotivist view, according to which value preferences are a matter of emotion (e.g. pleasure) or of desire. The methodological consequence is obvious: the study of values behooves only the psychologist.

Sociological holism is paired off to axiological objectivism, or the view that states that values are "there" just as much as facts. One species of objectivism is axiological sociologism, according to which every value system is nothing

but the collection of mores (customs) of some society--which, paradoxically, leads to radical axiological relativism. Another species of axiological objectivism is apriorism, either of the Kantian type (as in Scheler) or of the Platonic kind (as in Hartmann). According to it values are self-existing: they are independent of, and prior to, the things valued as well as of the valuing agents. Unlike sociology, apriorism involves axiological absolutism, hence dogmatism. The methodological consequence of sociological axiologism is that axiology is included in social science; that of apriorism is that axiology is an independent field within philosophy.

Finally, the companion of sociological systemism is axiological systemism, according to which there are both personal and social values, some of which derive from basic objective needs whereas others originate in wants; in turn, whereas some of the latter (namely those compatible with the satisfaction of the basic needs of others) are legitimate, others (those which conflict with such satisfaction)

are not. Accordingly, all the sciences ^{and technologies} of man, as well as philosophy, are competent to study values.

Having proposed and defended sociological systemism over its rivals in previous volumes of this Treatise, it should come as no surprise that we opt for axiological systemism. However, the latter can also be defended on the axiological field, without reference to social science or its philosophy. This is what may be said for it: (a) it does not have any of the fatal flaws of its rivals; (b) it squares with the ~~empirical~~ fact that, whereas some values (those rooted in basic needs) are objective, others (those deriving from wants) are not; (c) it accounts for the fact that there are both personal and social values; (d) it jibes with the libertarian ideal that, ultimately, the social values should be instrumental in realizing personal values; (e) it admits that personal values are constrained by society, but at the same time it states that, since there is nothing absolute about secondary values (as different from the primary

ones, which are rooted in basic needs), we ought to feel free to propose alterations in them.--and this squares with the fact that value systems HAVE evolved in the course of history--indeed, under our very noses; (e) it states that, far from being mutually independent, values form (value) systems.