



# THE ORIGIN OF VALUES

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EDITORS



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## *Acknowledgments*

The essays that follow originated in a conference entitled "Toward A Scientific Analysis of Values," held at The University of Arizona, February 1–4, 1989. Despite the evident importance of values in each of the disciplines with which the conference organizers were familiar, we were aware of little ongoing research on the subject. The idea behind the conference was to determine whether recent developments in the social, behavioral and biological sciences might shed new light on the origin, efficacy and measurement of values.

In one guise or another, values play a leading role in nearly every explanatory behavioral theory. In biology, values can be construed as the products of instincts and drives that help channel the organism's motility. In psychology, values are the motives for action, and, as such, they ultimately determine the specific consequences of known reinforcers. In economics, values—generally known as utilities and/or preferences—are one of the two fundamental determinants of all action (constraints external to the agent being the other). In sociology and anthropology values are considered to be basic determinants of social action.

Despite their undeniable theoretical centrality, values are perhaps the greatest black box in all of behavioral science. Science progresses unevenly, of course, and complex and intractable questions often are suppressed in favor of simpler, more tractable ones. Due to problems of conceptualization and measurement, research on value-determination frequently has been consigned to the scientific dustbin. A good deal of knowledge about behavioral outcomes has been acquired at the cost of ignoring the independent role of values in shaping behavior. Thus cognitive scientists have accounted for variations in behavior by studying the consequences of shifts in reinforcers (as in learning theory), and economists have done likewise by studying the consequences of shifts in relative prices (as in comparative statics).

Nevertheless, there are signs that the suppression of value considerations is no longer universally acceptable even in the most traditionally positivistic of disciplines. For example, some leading cognitive scientists have begun to worry about why it is that certain reinforcers reinforce; likewise, some leading economists have begun to worry about the extent

of apparently non-self-interested behavior in the real world. Simultaneously, there is new empirical research that bears on issues of value formation. For the most part, however, these forays into research on values have been conducted in mutual isolation by scholars in different disciplines with quite separate research traditions.

Whereas most discussions about values are themselves highly normative exercises in ethics or theology, this conference may have represented the first modern consideration of the problem of values from a frankly positive stance. It brought together the contributions of leading scholars who addressed fundamental questions about values including: What are the determinants of social values, taboos and ideologies? What are the determinants of individual values, such as attitudes toward risk and altruism? What is the nature of motivations and rewards? Finally, several contributors ask if there is an evolutionary basis for the development of values. The conference was organized in three sections emphasizing social scientific, psychological and biological perspectives on values, respectively, and this volume reflects its original format.

The conference planners—the three editors and Lynn A. Cooper of the Columbia University Psychology Department—and the contributors were not the only ones who played a vital role in creating this unusual event. We are grateful to The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Columbia University Center for Social Sciences, and The University of Arizona for their indispensable financial support. Lee Sigelman, then Dean of Arizona's College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, was particularly encouraging. Nancy Henkle took charge of logistics and arrangements with exceptional competence. We are also grateful for the stimulating participation of Douglass C. North, who talked on the economics of ideology.

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# 1

## *Values Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*

Michael Hechter

Few concepts are bandied about more liberally in popular, normative, and explanatory scholarly discourse than that of *values*. In the popular realm, parents are eager to have their children associate with peers having the appropriate values, politicians speak of their interest in restoring the traditional values of family, honesty, and hard work to their societies, and academics want to attract scholars with the right kind of values to their departments. In the normative realm, political democracy usually is justified by its ability to provide social policies that, to a greater or lesser extent, are responsive to citizens' values. In the explanatory realm, all action theories assume that behavior is determined not only by constraints emanating from the contexts in which actors are embedded, but also by actors' evaluations of the alternative outcomes they contemplate.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this, calls for renewed attention to values have been gaining momentum in all of the social and behavioral science disciplines.<sup>2</sup> These calls make it seem as if including the full range of human values in social and behavioral explanations is a matter of will. Yet it has seldom been shown how values can be incorporated fruitfully into such explanations.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The idea that the observer's knowledge of the values (or interests) of a subject renders the subject's behavior predictable goes back at least to the seventeenth century. Thus, "If you can apprehend wherein a man's interest to any particular game on foot doth consist you may surely know, if the man be prudent, whereabouts to have him, that is, how to judge of his design" (Gunn, 1968: 557).

<sup>2</sup> A brief sampling of these calls includes Sen (1977), Elster (1983), Hirschman (1984), Simon (1986), Wildavsky (1987), Etzioni (1988), Anderson (1990), Calhoun (1991), and Sunstein (1991). Even some economists fully wedded to neoclassical theory (like Becker, 1976: 14) express misgivings about the exogenous assumptions about values in their models.

<sup>3</sup> Apart from a large literature on revealed values, which is critically discussed below.



Nor have any compelling substantive theories of values emerged;<sup>4</sup> indeed, there is a striking absence of discussion about what such theories might consist of. In general, there has been too little appreciation of how difficult it is to incorporate values in social scientific research.

Before assessing the prospects for an enriched role for values in our explanations, it would be wise to recognize one cautionary fact. Whereas 30 years ago values explicitly occupied a central place in all of the social science disciplines (except, perhaps, in economics<sup>5</sup>), use of the concept has declined precipitously in each discipline (for sociology, see Spates, 1983; for political science, see Barry, 1979: 180; for anthropology see Barth, this volume<sup>6</sup>). Despite the strong intuition that evidence about values is needed to fully explain behavior, Stigler and Becker's (1977) claim that no significant behavior has ever been illuminated by assumptions of differences in values (or what they refer to as tastes) probably echoes the current wisdom in social science.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter does not consist of yet another plea for values. Instead, it focuses on how values may be studied so that ultimately they can contribute to our understanding of individual and social behavior. In the first part, I discuss some of the reasons why an explicit concern with values largely has disappeared in social scientific discourse. Progress in scholarly research on values has been slow because of several major impediments: values in all their forms are unobservable; theory in economics, psychology, and sociology provides little guidance for understanding how values shape behavior; simply postulating values is unconvincing

<sup>4</sup> For relevant discussions, see Pollak (1970), von Weizsäcker (1971), Cyert and De Groot (1975), the symposium on Formed Habits, *Journal of Economic Theory*, 13 (1976), Elster (1979: 77–86) and Becker (1992). While they are explicitly concerned with endogenizing values, most economic models of state-dependent preferences (such as Karni, 1985) are substantively empty, and purposely so. March's (1988) discussion of variable risk preferences is one of the more substantive attempts to endogenize internal states in recent social science.

<sup>5</sup> Even so, some economists paid them heed. Myrdal (1944) strongly emphasized the importance of values. Spengler (1961: 10), a past President of the American Economic Association, argued that "decision-makers interested in economic development . . . will seek to internalize in a society's members motivational and value orientations that make for economic growth and for political organization favorable to such growth." Similar statements were common among development economists of that era who founded the journal *Economic Development and Cultural Change* as a forum for this kind of research.

<sup>6</sup> Although values would appear to be constitutive of the very enterprise of moral philosophy, they have been neglected even in this discipline (Gaus, 1990: 1).

<sup>7</sup> This is not to imply that values have totally disappeared from view in empirical social science. Inglehart (1990) and others have attempted to document shifts in the content of values in postwar Europe from cross-national survey data, and some demographers (Leathäage, 1983; Cleland, 1985; Preston, 1987) have argued that value shifts are largely responsible for worldwide patterns of fertility decline. Much of this research is couched in methodologically defensive language, however, and it has only attained marginal attention in its respective disciplines.

when the processes responsible for generating them are unknown; and measurement problems abound. Then I briefly discuss several approaches to the genesis of values. I contend that social researchers will pay heed to values only if these impediments are appreciated and given their due. In the final part, I summarize the contributions to this volume and discuss the directions for future research that they entail.

### Four Impediments to the Study of Values<sup>8</sup>

#### *Values Can Take Many Forms, But All of These Are Unobservable*

One of the first clues of the troublesome status of values is that they have no consensual definitions. This gives each writer both the obligation and the license to define the term *de novo*. Values are *relatively general and durable internal criteria for evaluation*. As such, they differ from other concepts such as preferences (or attitudes) and norms. Like values, preferences (and attitudes) are internal; unlike them, preferences are labile rather than durable, and particular rather than general. Whereas norms are also evaluative, general, and durable, they are external to actors and—in contrast to values—require sanctioning for their efficacy.

Values differ in a number of ways.<sup>9</sup> They differ with respect to their *scope of control*. Some (such as adherence to an orthodox religion) concern objects and events that are under the actor's control. Others (such as the preference for participating in egalitarian rather than hierarchical groups) necessarily concern objects and events that are beyond any single actor's control.

Values differ in their *scope of application*. Some (for example, the altruism that often is considered responsible for behavior in the nuclear family) are evoked only under specific social situations, whereas others (for example, the reciprocity implicitly expressed in the Golden Rule) may be acted on in nearly all social situations.

Values differ in the degree to which they are *shared socially*. Some are pervasive in groups, whereas others are rare.<sup>10</sup> To see this we have to distinguish between two kinds of socially generated values, the instru-

<sup>8</sup> This section of the chapter is drawn from Hechter (1992).

<sup>9</sup> See Mandler (this volume) for the most elaborate attempt to provide a meaning for the term during the conference.

<sup>10</sup> This discussion ignores all pervasive values that result from physiological hard-wiring. Thus, people (as well as all other mammals) have an innate aversion to bitter-tasting substances such as milkweed, many of which are toxic, and an innate attraction to sweet-tasting substances such as bananas, many of which are nutritious (Scott & Yaxley, 1989). Whereas these values are universal in young children, adults can acquire tastes (like that for coffee) that to some degree contravene them.

mental and the immanent (cf. Wright, 1971; Rokeach, 1973).<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, people can act on the basis of *instrumental* values to combine their time and personal endowments to produce fungible resources (such as wealth, status, and power) that then may be exchanged for a wide variety of specific goods. Action on the basis of instrumental values provides means to other ends: it is designed to increase the actor's stock of fungible resources. As their name implies, instrumental values pervade society: they are what enable the economist's incentives to produce their intended effects.<sup>12</sup> The sources of this fundamentally extrinsic basis of values are relatively well understood (Hechter, 1991: 48–49).

On the other hand, people also can act on the basis of *immanent* values to attain goods and ends that are desired purely for their own sake (Hechter, 1987: 42–43).<sup>13</sup> Whereas instrumental values are held commonly by the members of society, immanent values are unlikely to be: they afford us an opportunity to individuate ourselves in social life. Almost everyone in American society prefers more money, status, and wealth to less, but the set of people for whom motorcycles and the music

<sup>11</sup> Not all socially produced pervasive values correspond to the instrumental values described above. Anthropologists long have insisted that values systematically vary across societies. The prototypical American capitalist may place the accumulation of profit above all, but insert that same person in Malinowski's Trobriand Islands and she will endeavor to become the greatest *donor* of goods. One of the most colorful descriptions of a value system that seems weird to us comes from Evans-Pritchard, who commented on the Nuer's overweening interest in cattle: "They are always talking about their beasts. I used sometimes to despair that I never discussed anything with the young men but livestock and girls, and even the subject of girls led inevitably to that of cattle. Start on whatever subject I would and approach it from whatever angle, we would soon be speaking of cows and oxen, heifers and steers, rams and sheep, he-goats and she-goats, calves and lambs and kids. . . . This obsession—for such it seems to an outsider—is due not only to the great economic value of cattle but also to the fact that they are links in numerous social relationships. Nuer tend to define all social processes and relationships in terms of cattle. Their social idiom is a bovine idiom" (Evans-Pritchard, 1940: 18–19). Examples of value differences across social formations abound (see below). To the degree that values are shared by members of a collectivity, they take on the character of an objective reality that may be reflected in prices or in existing institutions and therefore constrain individual action in predictable ways. These kinds of shared values result from the internalization of norms that have to be countenanced in decision-making: they serve to limit expectations, and also may carry sanctions in their wake. At least two things distinguish instrumental values from other kinds of socially produced shared values. First, unlike other shared values (which vary across societies), instrumental ones are universal. Second, they are self-serving, which suggests that they may well have evolutionary origins.

<sup>12</sup> That these instrumental values were also pervasive in early Christian society is revealed by St. Augustine's denunciation of them as constituting the sins of fallen men (Deane, 1963).

<sup>13</sup> These are often referred to as intrinsic values. Rawls' (1971: 62) concept of primary goods—things that every rational person is presumed to want—conflates the distinction between instrumental and immanent values.

of Mozart are jointly immanent values is probably quite small.<sup>14</sup> Behavior that is motivated by immanent values is independent of its effects on an actor's stock of fungible resources, and may even be inconsistent with the attainment of these resources (Schwartz, this volume).

Finally, values differ in the *level of analysis* in social scientific explanations. They enter into social scientific explanations both at the micro and macro levels of analysis. They play an important role as motivating elements in explanations of individual behavior, and often are invoked to explain differences in social outcomes such as institutional arrangements<sup>15</sup> and aggregate rates of productivity, fertility, and crime.<sup>16</sup>

*Existing Theoretical Traditions Provide Little Guidance  
for Understanding How Values Shape Behavior*

Classical economists followed Aristotle (*Politics*, Bk. I, Chap. 8) in dividing the source of values into separate components due to exchange and use (Georgescu-Roegen, 1968; Cooter & Rappoport, 1984). One might value a good for the satisfaction garnered by consuming it, as well as for the other goods that might be obtained by exchanging it. Yet this conception could not explain why some goods that were self-evidently very useful (like water) seemed to command lower prices than other much less useful goods (like diamonds).

Early marginalist economists replaced this multivalent conception of value with a unitary one that they termed *utility* (Stigler 1950a,b). They believed that the law of diminishing marginal returns provided them with an objective means of determining what the otherwise ghostly entity of utility consisted of.<sup>17</sup> It then would be possible to make the interpersonal comparisons of utility that were regarded as necessary for utilitarian theories of resource distribution (see Elster & Roemer, 1991). To illustrate, suppose that we live in an oasis deep in the Sahara. Faced with

<sup>14</sup> A critic might respond that this distinction may be overdrawn. For example, might not people seek money not for what it commands in the marketplace, but purely out of the desire to accumulate? A simple thought experiment can dispel the objection. People indeed may accumulate money without spending it, but it is unlikely that anyone would set about accumulating worthless scrip, like confederate dollars or monopoly money. Likewise, people do not tend to seek status as an immanent good, for if they did then they would be indifferent about those granting it to them (that is, the status granted by the homeless would be as valued as that granted by the Nobel Prize committee).

<sup>15</sup> Myrdal (1944) and Lipset (1963) are two well-known examples; for a critical discussion see Barry (1970).

<sup>16</sup> See the references in footnote 7.

<sup>17</sup> Previous to this, of course, classical economists such as Ricardo—and later Marx—had sought an objective basis for value in the amount of labor necessary to produce a given good.

drought, we have only a single indivisible bottle of water to give to one of the two strangers who appear out of the blue one afternoon. Assume that we believe that the bottle should go to the person who receives the greatest value from it. We learn that Bill has wandered for two days in the dunes without having had a drop to drink, and that Bob has consumed a quart of water this very morning. How can we decide whether Bill or Bob should get the bottle of water? The law of diminishing marginal returns enables us to determine that in the usual case Bill is the one who should receive the water. This law seemed to offer an objective basis for the allocation of resources that could generate a robust welfare economics.

Later marginalists, however, insisted that utility could not be determined objectively. Lord Robbins' logic carried the day:

Suppose elementary barter: *A*, who has a bottle of whisky, has the opportunity of exchanging it with *B*, who has a classical record of, say, *Fidelio*. It should be quite easy to ascertain by asking the relative valuations of the objects concerned before exchange. *A* relates that the classical record is worth more to him than a bottle of whisky; *B* contrariwise. This at no point involves interpersonal comparisons of absolute satisfaction. But now suppose that *A* and *B* fall into conversation about the respective enjoyments and *A* says to *B*, "Of course I get more satisfaction than you out of music", and *B* vigorously asserts the contrary. Needless to say, you and I as outsiders can form our own judgments. But these are essentially subjective, not objectively ascertainable fact. There is no available way in which we can measure and compare the satisfactions which *A* and *B* derive from music. (Robbins, 1984: 9).

According to this logic, utility had to be a totally subjective entity and therefore interpersonal comparisons could not be scientifically justifiable.<sup>18</sup> By making utility purely subjective, these theorists paradoxically set the stage for a purely objective economics in which the explanatory status of utility is entirely post hoc.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> In Mirowski's (1989: 374) provocative account of the history of economic thought, the later marginalists believed that they had abandoned the earlier substance theory of value for a field theory of value modeled on the principles of physics, but they did so in an incomplete and incoherent fashion.

<sup>19</sup> Economics is not concerned with ends as such. It assumes that human beings have ends in the sense that they have tendencies to conduct which can be defined and understood, and it asks how their progress towards their objectives is conditioned by the scarcity of means—how the disposal of the scarce means is contingent on these ultimate valuations. . . . The ends may be noble or they may be base. The may be 'material' or 'immaterial'—if ends can be so described. But if the attainment of one set of ends involves the sacrifice of others, then it has an economic aspect. Suppose, for instance, a community of sybarites, their pleasures gross and sensual, their intellectual activities preoccupied with the 'purely material'. It is clear enough that

Whereas economists gave up any pretense of developing a substantive theory of values in the late 1930s, psychologists continued to search for one. The question, "What is a reinforcer?" obviously is fundamental for all versions of behaviorism in psychology. Several theories were proposed, including theories of need reduction and drive. Need reduction theory (Hull, 1943) holds that anything that reduces a basic need will serve as a reinforcer; anything that increases a basic need will serve as a punisher. (Basic needs can be defined as goods that are essential to the animal's survival.) It is evident, however, that reducing some animal needs (such as the need for vitamin A) is not generally reinforcing. For many animals, it turns out that very strong reinforcers do not satisfy basic needs (thus, although people are reinforced by positive status, they will not die without it). In the light of difficulties of these sorts, drive theory was proposed. In the course of evolution, needs become internalized in animals in the form of instinctive drives. Thus the fact that a rat would die without food is represented inside the rat by a drive or motivation to obtain food.

Although originally drives may have corresponded absolutely to needs (and in primitive animals, may do so still), drives are supposed to have gained a certain independence from absolute needs in mammals such as rats, monkeys, and people. An individual monkey would not die without solving puzzles [something observed to be reinforcing] and an individual rat would not die without seeing other rats, but it is probably beneficial for the survival of these species in general for puzzle solving and right sighting to serve as rewards. In nature, a monkey that likes to solve puzzles might incidentally get the banana down from the tree; a rat that likes to see other rats might incidentally find warmth and sources of food. (Rachlin, 1989: 122–123)

Regrettably, the theory is circular because there is no independent measure of what an animal's drives or needs consist of.

Lacking a suitable theory, experimental psychologists have tended to assume that values derive exclusively from objective—hence, measur-

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economic analysis can provide categories for describing the relationships between these ends and the means which are available for achieving them. But it is not true, as Ruskin and Carlyle and suchlike critics have asserted, that it is *limited* to this sort of thing. Let us suppose this reprehensible community to be visited by a Savonarola. Their former ends become revolting to them. The pleasures of the senses are banished. The sybarites become ascetics. Surely economic analysis is still applicable. There is no need to change the categories of explanation. All that has happened is that the demand schedules have changed. Some things have become relatively less scarce, others more so. The rent of vineyards falls. The rent of quarries for ecclesiastical masonry rises. That is all. The distribution of time between prayer and good works has its economic aspect equally with the distribution of time between orgies and slumber. The 'pig-philosophy' to use Carlyle's contemptuous epithet—turns out to be all-embracing (Robbins, 1984: 24–26).

able—rewards. That supreme individualist Thorstein Veblen caricatured the psychologist's version of man as

a lightning calculator of pleasures and pains, who oscillates like a homogeneous globule of desire of happiness under the influence of stimuli that shift him about the area, but leave him intact. . . . Self-imposed in elemental space, he spins symmetrically about his own spiritual axis until the parallelogram of force bears down upon him, whereupon he follows the line of least resistance. (Veblen, [1919] 1961: 73)

A more recent assessment complains that

The study of concrete rewards has produced a wealth of quantitative detail about how reinforcement (the internal mechanism of reward) depends on previous deprivation, rate of delivery, the presence or absence of other sources of reinforcement, etc. However, in a prosperous society, most behaviour is rewarded by emotional processes that are occasioned by other people's social responses, or by tasks or games which are rewarding in their own right. It would clearly be desirable if these subtle reward factors could be understood in the same framework as visceral ones, but psychology has difficulty bridging the gap. (Ainslie, 1986: 135)

Whereas economic theory has virtually nothing to say about the content of individual values, psychological research points to the environment as the principal source of rewarding resources. What seems to be missing from this account is the awareness, first, that environmentally determined values may be inconsistent, and second, that some values may be autonomous and maintained even in opposition to pervasive environmental rewards. Without this awareness it is difficult to account for the ambivalence that seems so common in human experience. Nor can we easily explain the existence of heroes, martyrs, and the kinds of innovators who are celebrated in popular literature (as in Ayn Rand's melodramatic classic *The Fountainhead*, modeled on the career of Frank Lloyd Wright).

Does sociological theory help us come to grips with values? Although much of Simmel's difficult text on *The Philosophy of Money* (1907) is devoted to analysis of valuation, the essential sociological theorist of values is Max Weber.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps more than any other social scientist in history, Weber sought to establish a comprehensive theory of social behavior. A committed comparativist, he understood that action deemed reasonable in one society might be incomprehensible in another. To account for

<sup>20</sup> Parsons' extensive ruminations about values were effectively challenged by Blake and Davis (1964).

these systematic differences in behavior, it was necessary to build a social science that was capable of treating not only instrumental action, but also action motivated by values, affect, and tradition. Hence, religious values—for example, those deriving from ascetic Protestantism—might exercise a profound impact on economic action—such as the tendency to accumulate capital.

As part of this project, Weber sought to understand the social determinants of different religious values. He particularly emphasized a causal link between modes of living and propensities to religious values (Weber, [1922] 1968: 468–483). For example, since the lot of peasants is so strongly tied to nature and so little tied to economic rationality, peasants would develop systematic religious ideologies only under the threat of enslavement or proletarianization; since the life pattern of warrior nobles has little affinity with the notion of a beneficent providence or with the systematic ethical demands of a transcendental god, members of this stratum also have little propensity to develop mature religious values. Although it is child's play to challenge the evidence that supports these assertions, Weber's attempt to derive a structural account of value differences between groups and societies remains exceptional in social science.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, his followers have found it difficult to move beyond the useful distinction between instrumental and value-oriented action. Nor have they been able to shed much light on the conditions governing trade-offs among these different types of action. As a result, this promising line of analysis has been abandoned in contemporary Weberian scholarship.

*Postulating Values in Behavioral Explanations Is Unconvincing  
When the Processes That Generate Them Are Unknown*

Values can be specified simply by postulating them for the relevant actors. In practice, this entails the assumption that all these individuals have homogeneous values, at least within broadly defined boundaries. An important instance is the employment of wealth maximization as a behavioral postulate in economic analyses (Friedman, 1953; Becker, 1976; Stigler & Becker, 1977).<sup>22</sup> Insofar as wealth may be used to purchase goods that satisfy all kinds of values, then it is reasonable to expect everyone to prefer more wealth to less (no matter the content of any specific individual's other values). To the degree that alternatives

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the closest contemporary analogue to Weber's structuralist perspective is found in Kohn's research program relating social class to parenting styles (based on the conceptions in Kohn, 1969).

<sup>22</sup> For animal behavior, the most common behavioral postulate is the maximization of inclusive fitness (Part III, this volume).



may be represented as more or less costly, then all behavior can be analyzed from this point of view.<sup>23</sup>

The problem is that a great deal of individual behavior is not explicable in wealth-maximizing terms.<sup>24</sup> Some behavior seems better explained as the product of status or power maximization. Of course, following Weber, status and power can be added to wealth as postulated values in behavioral models (North, 1981; Lindenberg, 1990), although much precision is lost by doing so. But even then, large difficulties remain. On the one hand, this extension of postulated values rules out unique behavioral predictions, for little is known about the conditions under which motivation stems from wealth instead of from considerations of status or power. On the other hand, this strategy seems difficult to reconcile with findings that individuals sometimes do not appear to be acting to maximize any (or all) of these qualities, but instead act morally, or on the basis of such nonvalue considerations as ritual or habit (Weber, [1922] 1968; Sen, 1977; Etzioni, 1988). Overall, the evidence suggests that actors in modern society are likely to have heterogeneous values. Theory leads to the same conclusion, for if equally endowed actors had identical values then they would have no motive to engage in exchange (Arrow, 1990: 28). Hence, it is reasonable to expect that a more adequate approach to the specification of values may lie elsewhere—in measurement efforts.

### *Measurement Problems Abound*

In principle, values can be measured either by asking people to describe their own values or by imputing their values from observed behavior. Although values are unobservable to others, it makes sense to assume that they are observable to subjects themselves. I cannot presume to know your values because I cannot read your mind, but surely you have the ability to read your *own* mind. This kind of logic gives survey measures of values their intuitive appeal. Yet the values produced by much survey data tend to be labile rather than stable; in addition, they do a poor job of predicting behavior (Schuman & Johnson, 1976; Hill, 1981). These difficulties derive from a variety of sources, among them the fact that people may conceal their values for strategic purposes, that

<sup>23</sup> Marxists and ecological determinists also postulate values (that is, interests) but see these as homogeneous within subgroups (such as classes, or groups occupying a similar ecological niche).

<sup>24</sup> In tacit appreciation of these difficulties, even economists—who are most wedded to the wealth-maximization assumption approach—have begun adding unconventional utility arguments to their models (Akerlof and Yellin, this volume; Becker, 1981; Easterlin, 1980; Frank, 1988; Brenner, 1983). Wealth maximization is a good deal more useful in accounting for *aggregate* rather than individual behavior, however, due to the law of large numbers (Hechter, 1987: 31–32).