

## ASPECTS OF THE CONCEPT OF (PROFESSIONAL) VALUES

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**Abstract:** *The present research is part of an ample project which laid the foundation of our Phd thesis (The Incidence of the Emotional Intelligence on the cristalisation of the personologic profile of the navy officer, 2007).*

*The study deals with some aspects of the concept of value and modalities of placing the (professional) values in a hierarchical order, manifesting, in addition, a higher degree of intercorelativity with variables from the cognitive sphere, from emotional, emphatic and personality area.*

### 1. ARGUMENT

In the general introduction of the paper we outlined a set of personality features as professional and psychological values.

Most commonly, the value is perceived as a special distinctive quality or as an ensemble of such qualities destined to satisfy reasons and aims of human activity. The value has its origin in the knowledge relationship subject – „object”. In one way or another, the value presupposes an optim degree of awareness of the term relationship „partner” and that is why we should say that it is a feature proper to the rational being, the only one of the above mentioned relation, and who is capable of assign it to the other one. We were saying that this discovery, or state-of-the-art, or human deed endorsed by the coefficient of exemplarity etc., seems to us as „detached” from its author/authors, but only to the extent to which we can notice that the latter/the latter ones can assign it to the „object”. Expressions like „the value of a technical device”, „the value of a plot” etc. Are issued in full awareness that in that object or „product” the axiological significance is inculcated by the creative effort of the author as representing the „materialisation” of an activity or assignment with a certain result. From the „opposite” point of view, we have the philosophical perspective – the axiology of a special system of theoretical knowledge about the origin, essence, hierarchical order and the social functions of values. Our introduction does not claim questioning the problem at this level. We shall use the senses ( meanings ) of the concept in question from a „working” perspective used in psychological research. The above mentioned utility is imposed by the nature of personological research which aims at obtaining an individual or group personological profile within which a special place is reserved to internalised values and to their expressive-behavioural component.

Three senses (meanings) are important in this discussion (after ERSOC, symbole-sigle under which a group of socio-cognitive researchers from the Grenoble University II Social Psychology Laboratory identify themselves; see the article *Value* in the *Psychology Dictionary*, 2006, R.Doron and Françoise Parot). The first sense draws together the concept of *Value* with the one of *Valence*.

For the individual, a certain state of nature, of objects implies in a real mode an objective quality through which they appear as stimuli capable of generating a significance, negative or positive, sometimes in direct accordance with the motivational charge of the cognitive relation individual – object. This means that whenever the individual feels a state of necessity (needs, wants, reason, ideal...) they should turn to the object which can bring in the expected satisfaction. This means that at three different levels of structuring the life experience, of social influence, the individual conscientiously acts by orientation towards an „object” due to an interior impulse, a *motive/reason*. The real axiological sense of the object – stimulus, as a result of *internalisation*, presents itself as a feature/characteristic of the system of reasons specific for each individual or group. But not so much as to have an equal number of reasons or motivations with all the individuals and existing situations. At the same time the value appears as resident in the object itself

the effect of *sui generis* assignment by the subject. (P.Popescu-Neveanu, 1978, the term *value*). The second sense of the concept of value involves the *social utility* associated to the individual conduct as well as to the group behaviour, case in which the focus is placed on the „evaluation practices the function of which is to trace social utilities...”

The third sense of the concept of value is placed in a broader „ideologic” plan, in which the value draws near the *aim* (knowledge/cognition, freedom/liberty, solidarity) and it is applicable especially to groups, without excluding the individual and it, „leads to the accentuation of the significance of praxis or social practices” (for instance, *military values* in general, some of them having some branch specifications such as qualities pertaining almost exclusively to navy personnel). A great number of authors make a confusion between the first two senses assimilating the motivational-affective aspects with the evaluative ones, state maintained, among other things, by the methods and procedures in use in the researches in this domain (see for example *the semantic differentiator* of Osgood). ERSOC, whose example we took in stating this point of view (see: Roland Doron and Françoise Parot, *Psychology Dictionary*, 2006, the term *value*) reveals the regrettable character of this circumstance since „the study of social cognition ( the representation of social situations, the implicit theories of personality) systematically point out massive of evaluative nature the statute of which is not explained” (2006, p.812). We have retained the objective and subjective side of the value in general, as well as its social utility. In our research we will adopt the third sense, from the perspective of which we will make some statements:

➤ Not all the values from several questionnaires are purely professional, some of them being unconditionally psychological.

➤ We do not have, as it is in the domain of ethics or aesthetics, a theory of psychological values, but there is a matter of consensus the fact that the reasons, feelings, ideals, the fundamental concepts, aptitudes and especially attitudes - these constitutive units of the personological profile, be it individual or in group, have clearcut axiological features, unless they can be considered (*psychological*) values proper.

We should also mention that empathy, subject and concept relatively known, can be defined from a triple perspective: as a generic personality feature, as a special aptitude and as *sui generis attitude* involved in human knowledge and interaction, therefore, as psychological value.

As a result, we find that all three senses of the concept in question have a certain psychological meaning, with a particular significance and specificity. For instance, „valence” as „the ability of an atom to combine with other atoms”, configures a property which leads to the principle of systemic organisation at different levels of psychological consistency; also, in ecology, the valence appears as „the possibility of a species to live in various environments”; or in Psychology („ the valence of an object”, „attraction (*positive valence*) or repulsion (*negative valence*) which a subject experiences from their perspective” (*Dictionnaire de notre temps*, 1988, the term *valence*).

The value in its own right beyond the economic and socio-organisational sense of *utility* and/or pragmatic end, is a personality feature which envisage a set of qualities of the subject, justifying for the social esteem received, for the recognition granted and which, unconditionally involves *the self-appraisal awareness* – defining coordinate of great personalities. The judgements issued by personalities superiorly „crystalised”, (*value judgements*), as well as the judgements issued by the society on the representative personalities (*judgements of reality*) are *assertions* „which imply an *appraisal* (presupposing the undoubted competence a those authorised upon the evaluation capacities), upon what is stated as a „fact”, leads us to the most meaningful sense of value, namely the „ideal principle to which commonly refer the members of a community in order to found their judgements, and guide their conducts” (*Dictionnaire de notre temps*, 1988, the term *value*).

Such being the understanding of the concept of *value* and awaiting for a possible theory of psychological values we have attempted an investigation on this theme having as subjects future (eminent) navy officers, including a sample of officer-instructors as a reference lot, a first and delineated psychological investigation in the domain.

## **2. A possible design of value research**

The present research is part of an ample project which laid the foundation of our Phd thesis (*The Incidence of the Emotional Intelligence on the Crystallisation of the Personologic Profile of the navy Officer*, 2007). The phenomenon of „incidence” was cut out from the context of the thesis, rephrased in some points and published as such in 2008. The chapter related to the professional and empathic values is part of the whole structure together with the personality factors (16 PF – Cattell), variable-scale (CPI – Gough), basic components of general intelligence (Eysenck) and, obviously, the emotional intelligence variables investigated on *Bar-On Questionnaire* and *Jeanne Segal Inventory*, the latter sequence being in process of publication in the Psychology Review.

Value research has been of current interest for doctoral theses within the *Philosophy and Psychology Institute* of Romanian Academy, for the last decade, theses which have had amongst their main objectives the grasping of some relations or even of the „whole” portrait of personality of various subject categories, resorting to adequate experimental designs. At the same time, the teaching staff from the Bucharest University – Psychology Section have published their own research results, one of them being used for elaborating an interesting *Value Inventory* (Marius Gheorghe, 2003). About certain researches on the theme we shall make special statements with a view to place our own research with some modest personal contributions, within the broader experimental context. We will give prominence to those who resorted to the Super professional inventory as well and with whom I have been working for the present paper.

The analytical presentation of the results communicated by previous researches would be undoubtedly useful from rather another perspective than the one we are interested in along the lines of this study. Therefore, we will primarily deal with general descriptive aspects (primary analysis), and secondarily, with specific-differential aspects. As we have proceeded in the doctoral theses, we will reserve for the primary analysis, with its corollary – the intradimensional corollarity of values, a more consistent part (in order to be able to actively engage in the present research domain) and we will proceed selectively in the case of „secondary” analysis – value intercorollarity and data interpretation of the most significant found in the factorial solutions (in order to distinguish the particular criteria within which certain final results can be ascribed to the personologic profile of certain

professional categories, in our case the profile of the navy officer). For more operativity, we shall mention/refer to especially five researches in the field from which we derived mainly data which respond to two analysis procedures: setting up of some first hierarchical order of the professional values under research, according to the value of mean score per lot, and to each top value-variable, and a secondary hierarchy, according to the „vocation” of the top value, in order to realise interactionist connexions (intra- and intercorrelations) within the area which comprises the 15 values of the *Super Inventory*. Therefore, we will resort to not only two modalities or forms of analysis, but also to (if not in the first place) two most assuredly levels of value interrelation, the former referring to the description and classification of values „on the surface”, the latter referring to the systemic interrelations of values „vertically” as indicators personologic profile consistency.

As far as the hierarchy of values according to the criterion „the value of mean score”, regarding those values which are at the top, in the first two researches noted in Table no.1, three utilitarian values are present: *economic advantages*, *physical environment*, and *the way of living* (partially), less in the case of school counsellors (*economic advantages* absent), as it was found by Rodica Buruian (2000, p.108-110) and by Francesca Sima (2003, p. 118-122) with three lots of military – Military Academy graduates, human resources officers and military leaders. The other two top values (in the case of the school counsellors-three) are common for five out of six samples, *the value of relation with the superiors*, whilst the fifth top value, *professional success*, is common for both lots of students and for the military leaders lot as well. In the case of other three lots we find one value each characteristic for pupils – *professional safety*, for psychology/pedagogy students – *independence*, and for counsellors – *altruism*.

Two observations seem to utterly impose: the one is related to the situation of the three top pragmatic values in a period still close to the changing of the social and political regime in the country, opportunity for releasing the old inhibitions concerning the free assertion of a new conception regarding individual property and way of life; the other observation is that at the top there are, for almost all the lots, values perfectly motivated, by the suggestion they give as a fact specific for profession: *relation with superiors* (especially with the military), *altruism* (with counsellors), *professional safety* (with pupils), *professional success* (with the military and the students).

In the case of the other works, elaborated later, with their sublots of investigation, one of the utilitarian values is constantly „left out” (either *the economic advantages*, most frequently, or *the physical environment*), remaining almost permanently and with all the lots only the desired *way of life* – very likely a more profound aspiration towards liberty, dignity etc. For a change, there are recorded top values specific for professions, therefore for the domain of activity of the subjects like: *creativity* for the politechnic students, *aesthetic values* for the art students (Valeriu – Mircea Popa, 2004, p.98-101), *variety of conditions*, *the prestige* and *independence* for the journalism students (Camelia – Mihaela Popa, 2006, p.124-130), *professional success*, *command* and *independence* for the students in cooperation or competition conditions (Cristina – Corina Știr, 2007, p. 150-164).

The differences occurred in time, in the top values intensely uttered/assumed by various subjects seem to impose the idea that preparing for profession and doing a profession with real efficiency are associated with the internalisation of a fundamental value, including the specific ones which can occur in assured components of some possible personologic profiles which include attitudes- essential and specific values.

More profound observations and interpretations can be revealed from the analysis of the hierarchies of the same values, but this time from the perspective of the „connexionist valences” criterion (intradimensional correlations) of these. We assume/presume that the „new” hierarchies which can account for the consistency of the „system” of values can reach significant configurations different from those based on the value of mean scores. We, therefore, observe, that in almost all the cases, *creativity* (Rodica Buruian, 2006, for the cases of pupils and students; Francisca Sima, 2003, for the case of Military Academy graduates; Valeriu-Mircea Popa, 2006, for the case of written media; finally, Cristina-Corina Știr, 2007, for the students engaged in competitive activities). Another value absent from the top based on the value of mean score, which frequently appears in the top based on the disponibility of value intercorrelativity, is *command* (Rodica Buruian, 2000, for counsellors; Francisca Sima, 2003, for „Human Resources” officers; Camelia-Mihaela Popa, 2006, for the case of journalism and audio-video journalist students; finally, Cristina-Corina Știr, 2007, for students engaged in co-operation activities). Other values present accidentally in the first modality/level of analysis appear with high frequency in the top based on the intradimensional correlativity criterion, such as *prestige* (Rodica Buruian, 2000, for all the three experimental lots); *altruism* (Francisca Sima, 2003, for the case of military leaders and „Human Resources” officers).

Referring, as it is but becoming, to the intercorrelativity proportions of values, we opted for a number of correlations significantly equal with at least seven, in order to rank one value or another in the top. In this selection it has been operated on the total number of possible proportions of significant correlations for each value, so that, according to the mean proportions, we find that the „top” samples which present the highest percentages of significant intercorrelations are, in decreasing order: the art students with 9,80%, school counsellors, the audio-video journalists and the students engaged in co-operation activities with 9,60% each. The lowest intercorrelation proportions of values are registered by pupils and Military Academy graduates (9,00% and 8,80% respectively). Thus, our supposition regarding the adoption of the modality/level of analysis of data on the criterion of proportion of significant intercorrelation as having the „vocation” of revealing some aspects of enhanced consistency of the personologic profile, seems to be sufficiently validated by the results of other researches. As we are going to see further on, it will be necessary for us to resort to another criterion, namely, the (high) level of general intelligence abilities and of the emotional intelligence as a *sine-qua-non* condition of consistency or crystallisation of the personological profile. As far as the insertion of the top values in the verisimilar factorial configuration, essential aspect of results integration, which will be published independently, we can anticipate that, in a plurality of cases, with certain lots of investigation, a consistent set of fundamental values, will constitute in (axiologic) factors together with others of cognitive (intelligence) or personological nature.

In the area of psychological researches centred on values we mention as having for the time being only a methodological meaning the experiment in „terminus” stage of a value inventory – „IVL-91”, owed to Marius Gheorghe (2003) and a particular way of investigating the values in relation to engagement and development in career, owed to Valeria Negovan (2004), works we will be referring to during the research. The following research has had as subjects navy officer-instructors and two lots of future navy officers (junior students and graduate students of the Naval Academy) 120 (40 subjects for each sample). The method used was D.E.Super’s „Inventory of professional values” adapted by S. Chelcea (2003). The major objective and the basic hypothesis meet, as aim and expectance to see to what extent the representative (professional) values characterise a side of the

personological profile and insert in the range of consistency factors of this profile. Utilised in various cases, especially in social psychology researches, the „Super” Inventory proved useful for grasping the appropriation of work values and of life relations by various categories of subjects. For the studies centered on the personality of the youth, the professional value hierarchy is an essential co-ordinate in the evaluation of the main attributes of characterization, of present and long term axiological orientation. We considered it useful the application of the „Super” Inventory thinking of the possibility of including some (professional) values in defining the navy personality, in possible correlations with variables from the cognitive and personological sphere proper.

Let us examine first the values with the highest significance for the subjects, thus illustrating the top values. We observe that the junior and senior students show an almost isentical „classification”: on the first two places there appear the values of *physical environment* (pointing to the necessity and expectation of physical environment conditions at least satisfactory for professional activity) and *economic advantages* (remuneration and the possibilities of consistent and certain increase of the reward for work in the capacity of life ensuring condition). Even if the mean scores for these two values and the same scores for the following three do not present significant differences, we consider that the first two values have a deeper major sense for these subjects, since, besides the mean scores, we record the lowest dispersions from the whole table of the Inventory variables. We interpret the fact as a collective effect of grouping around the mean of the majority of subjects, which means that the hierarchy resulted from firm and similar options: economic advantages and satisfactory physical environment are two norms/standards subordinated to a life principle. As a result, in hierachical order there apperas *the way of life*, a way of enrolling in the profession permeable for the organisation of activity in the way in which the personal liberty of decision is included. These three values are specific in order, slightly unidentical but with almost equal intensities for both levels of age/experience for students as well as for officers (between 4,50 and 4,80).

The last two out of the five top values can make the difference between the students and the officer-instructors. Students of both age/experience level opted for these two last values in the following way: *relations with colleagues* and *relations with superiors*, in the sense of ever growing chance of having righteous commanders, professionally competent and humane. On the other hand, with officers, these two last top values are directly related to the statute of the subjects in the military hierarchy, with correct representation the need of representation through high professional competence. These values are *professional success*, in the sense of orientation towards activities (in this case-formative) to the effect of concrete and quality results, as well as in the sense of self-exigency for the thing well done, as well as the *intellectual stimulation* as a need or self-exigency to choose demanding professional activities, which set real problems-these sources of individual and collective self-progress, sources for permanently trying new solutions, adequate professional orientation of personal interests and aspirations.

Both the similarities and differences between the students and the officers tell about a homogeneity of some vital motives/reasons of professional formation and about an adjustment to the requirements of professional activity in accordance with the basic status of the subjects – professional (self)formation and the modelling of the competence of the future navy professional in accordance with the objectives of their work domain.

Comparing this small design of professional values of highly significance for life of navy subjects, with the corresponding design specific for other professions, we will find first and foremost, common terms in spite of the different occupations of the compared samples.

Thus, in the first four top values- as Sima Francisca (2003) proceeded with officers and students of Land Forces, and as Buruian Rodica (2000) with school counsellors- we find that three values are placed by all subjects at the same level of importance: *way of life, physical environment and relations with superiors*, but differentiating elements appear to be *professional success*-with Land Forces commanders and *altruism*-with school counsellors, and with the students at psychology-pedagogy there appears *independence*-a „cicilian” standard which establishes the need for planning and carrying out of activity at personal pace and in the climate more general of lack of artificial and unproductive tensions.

As far as the set of „opposite” values is concerned, considered less important, there appear the *aesthetic, variety* and *command* ones –with the navy and, in addition, *creativity*-with counsellors, students and commanders (Land Forces). *Command* seems to be perceived more as a work task rather than an inner necessity, a norm of self-realisation or personal fulfillment; *creativity*, as a „low” value, unimportant or in any case not a top one, seems to have found this placement in its own right for certain professions (counsellors and students), but for the navy personnel, especially officers, it appears very close to the top values, or only for the mean values for the navy students.

These marks characteristic for the professional value hierarchy for navy personnel, especially the officers, seem to be the result of concrete understanding of high

regulating work standards, of the personalising ones as well as of those of personological formation of the future navy professionals.

As far as the „low” values are concerned there is a consensus as to the last two places in the hierarchy- the *aesthetic* and the *variety* of conditions in general and of professional ones in particular: the condition of beauty is, seemingly, included in the, exceptional „character” or in the high intensity of navy demands and experiences. A certain place is occupied by the *command* value: for the students this follows directly the top values, namely at the top of the mean ones, and at the end of this set, that is the first of the „low”value series-with officers. This appears as an aspiration for for students and, apparently, a somehow routine problem for officers, which is in the common order of things for a leader who assumes and develops the efficient didactic style doing away with „imposed” learning/modelling.

However, the fact that in top are placed as high values the economic advantages and the favourable physical environment is interpreted as an option proper for the consumer society with emphasis placed on the material needs, abruptly inculcated-as a sort of revenge for the previous states of frustration and precariousness- in the nowadays man in this country. Certainly, the social psychologists and sociologists are the first summoned to find deeper explanations in/for this matter.

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