An “If This, Then That” Formulation of Decisions Related to Social Role Valorization As a Better Way of Interpreting It to People

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Abstract: Social Role Valorization is interpreted as a high-order empirical social science theory that informs people about the relation between the social roles that people hold and what happens to them as a result, and how to valorize (improve or defend) the social roles of people at risk of social devaluation. Because Social Role Valorization is not a “religion,” people must go to higher belief systems to determine whether and why other humans should be valued or devalued, whether the social valuation of others should be promoted, and which presumably effective means to this end are morally defensible or even imperative. Whether a pursuit of social valuation in certain cases has unacceptable implications can be in the domain of either “religion” or practical trade-offs.

There have been many misinterpretations of normalization theory and Social Role Valorization by their opponents. In the case of normalization, a contributing factor had been that there were so many versions of it, though two versions have been the dominant ones: those by Nirje (1969) and Wolfensberger (1970, 1972, 1980; Wolfensberger & Glenn 1973, 1975). Many people opposed normalization and/or Social Role Valorization because they had never studied, learned, or understood these, whereas others would not study, learn, or understand these because they opposed them—or whatever they thought constituted normalization or Social Role Valorization. Sometimes, opponents seize upon statements that supporters of the schemas intend to be probabilistic in nature, but interpret these as if they were meant to have been absolutistic in nature. For instance, a Social Role Valorization proponent may state something like,

We know that people tend to be judged by the company they keep. Therefore, devalued people are apt to be perceived more positively by others if they are associated with people who are highly valued by society.

However, this may get interpreted by those who are not sympathetic to Social Role Valorization as meaning that Social Role Valorization is implacably opposed to two handicapped people ever being together, or that such persons should never become friends, or that Social Role Valorization teaches that handicapped people who are integrated with nonhandicapped ones will definitely be seen and treated more positively by others in society. However, none of these interpretations would be correct.

But often, supporters of normalization or Social Role Valorization have also misinterpreted these schemes, as by stating things in improperly absolute terms (e.g., “Social Role Valorization says that you must always do ...”). Some such supporters know better than to phrase things in this way; some do not, perhaps because they are unsophisticated, naive, or had little training in normalization or Social Role Valorization.

In this essay, I am addressing a particular kind of misinterpretation of Social Role Valorization by its supporters, or even teachers,
1. For instance, if the object being compared is a book, the comparison might focus on its physical characteristics, such as size and weight.

2. In this case, the book is compared to a smaller object, such as a coin.

3. The comparison is made by measuring the dimensions of the objects and determining which one is larger or smaller.

4. For example, if the book is compared to a coin, it would be determined that the book is larger.

5. This comparison is made by measuring the height, width, and thickness of the book and the coin.

6. The comparison is made by measuring the weight of the book and the coin.

7. For instance, if the book weighs 500 grams and the coin weighs 10 grams, the book would be determined to be heavier.

8. The comparison is made by measuring the density of the book and the coin.

9. For example, if the book and the coin are made of the same material, the density of each would be the same.

10. The comparison is made by measuring the color of the book and the coin.

11. For instance, if the book and the coin are both red, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

12. The comparison is made by measuring the texture of the book and the coin.

13. For example, if the book and the coin are both smooth, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

14. The comparison is made by measuring the material of the book and the coin.

15. For instance, if the book and the coin are both made of cardboard, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

16. The comparison is made by measuring the durability of the book and the coin.

17. For example, if the book and the coin are both made of durable materials, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

18. The comparison is made by measuring the cost of the book and the coin.

19. For instance, if the book costs $20 and the coin costs $1, the comparison would be determined to be unequal.

20. The comparison is made by measuring the availability of the book and the coin.

21. For example, if the book and the coin are both available in a store, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

22. The comparison is made by measuring the convenience of using the book and the coin.

23. For instance, if the book and the coin are both easy to use, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

24. The comparison is made by measuring the functionality of the book and the coin.

25. For example, if the book and the coin are both used for the same purpose, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

26. The comparison is made by measuring the aesthetic appeal of the book and the coin.

27. For instance, if the book and the coin are both visually appealing, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

28. The comparison is made by measuring the educational value of the book and the coin.

29. For example, if the book and the coin are both educational, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

30. The comparison is made by measuring the practicality of using the book and the coin.

31. For instance, if the book and the coin are both practical, the comparison would be determined to be equal.

32. The comparison is made by measuring the personal preference of the user.

33. For example, if the user prefers a book over a coin, the comparison would be determined to be unequal.