**Emotional Value Attribution and Comparative Value Assessment – Analytical Elements
for a Sociology of Valuation and Evaluation**

Anne K. Krüger & Martin Reinhart

anne.k.krueger@hu-berlin.de, martin.reinhart@hu-berlin.de

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin,

German Center for Higher Education Research and Science Studies

Abstract

The sociology of valuation and evaluation is a ‘booming field’ (Meer and Lamont, 2016: 8) that provides the thematic framework for a plethora of different empirical phenomena. Yet, current debates lament deficiencies in a clear analytical focus and a profound theoretical conceptualization. In this article, we therefore strive for more analytical and theoretical clarity, first, by suggesting an analytical differentiation of value, values, value attribution, and value assessment as the objects of study within this research field. Second, we propose a theoretical conceptualization of valuation as emotional value attribution and evaluation as comparative value assessment. Assuming that value is nothing objectively given, we highlight the role of emotions for answering the question how value attribution relates to the comparative value assessment of persons, practices, ideas, and objects.

Keywords: sociology of valuation and evaluation, value attribution, value assessment, emotions

The ‘booming field’ of a sociology of valuation and evaluation

The sociology of valuation and evaluation is a ‘booming field’ (Meer, Lamont 2016: 8). It currently provides the thematic framework for a plethora of different empirical phenomena (Cefaï et al., 2015; Kjellberg and Mallard, 2013; Krueger and Reinhart, 2017; Lamont, 2012). These range from the attribution of monetary or ideational value to material or immaterial goods, such as art (Beckert and Roessel, 2013; Hutter and Throsby, 2008; Karpik, 2010), nature (Fourcade, 2011a, 2011b; Thévenot et al., 2000), or human life (Hood, 2017; Zelizer, 1979) to research on formalized evaluation processes, such as credit or hotel ratings (Fourcade and Healy, 2013; Jeacle and Carter, 2011; Orlikowski and Scott, 2014; Scott and Orlikowski, 2012) or university rankings (Espeland and Sauder, 2007; Sauder and Espeland, 2009, 2016). Besides studies on processes of valuation and evaluation, normative value orders conceptualized as orders of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Lamont and Thévenot, 2000) or institutional logics (Friedland, 2013, 2017; Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012) have been a matter of analysis putting forth questions of heterarchy, conflict, and compromise between different value orders that need to be dealt with in everyday practice (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999; Lamont, 2009; Stark, 2009).

Against this backdrop of a multitude of studies that are currently subsumed under the label of a sociology of valuation and evaluation, we witness different attempts to provide a theoretical framework for this diverse field of study. Michèle Lamont (2012) has pioneered these attempts by demonstrating the variety of studies that have already dealt with questions of valuation and evaluation. Summarizing different strands of research under the label of a ‘comparative sociology of valuation and evaluation’, she calls for a dialogue between different approaches to

stimulate theory-building. She also offers some first thoughts by highlighting categorization and legitimation as two fundamental practices taking place in all of these different contexts. Claes-Fredrik Helgesson and Fabian Muniesa (2013) also point to different areas in sociological research that are currently dealing with various forms of valuation. As the editors of 'Valuation Studies', they seek to provide 'a good amalgamating area that facilitates dialogue and debate between different scholars of different approaches and disciplines' (Helgesson and Fabian Muniesa, 2013: 3). However, they also notice the problem of a rather broad conceptualization of 'valuation as a social practice' (Helgesson and Fabian Muniesa, 2013: 4). They therefore argue that the aim of valuation studies should be to discuss, before all, what value and valuation are about. Daniel Cefaï et al. (2015), too, search for an integrative approach as 'a focus of perspective, transversal to all the social sciences' (2015: 2). They emphasize that a 'sociology of valuation and evaluation is not only concerned with a specific sector of social life or a minor segment of grand theories' but rather 'opens an intellectual space in which core issues in the social sciences such as interaction, agency, values, norms, collective action, and the role of institutions are discussed' Cefaï et al., 2015: 6). Anne Krueger and Martin Reinhart (2017) have also addressed the question of theory development. Reviewing the literature in different subfields that deal with questions of valuation and evaluation, they extract valuation practices, value structures, valuation infrastructure, valuation situations and reflexivity of valuation as necessary elements that 'theories of valuation' need to build on.

Furthermore, many studies that deal with valuation and evaluation draw on classical theorists and, specifically, on Émile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, or John

Dewey (e.g. Bowker and Star, 1999; Espeland and Stevens, 1998, 2008; Fourcade, 2011a, 2011b; Hutter and Stark, 2015; Lamont, 2009; Munck and Zimmermann, 2015; Muniesa, 2011; Stark, 2009; Zelizer, 1979, 1985, 2011). Their pivotal ideas about categorization, classification, and the attribution and enactment of value (Dewey, 1916, 1939; Durkheim, 1954 [1912]; Durkheim and Mauss, 1963; Simmel, 1978 [1900]) appear as a basic guideline for theorizing valuation and evaluation processes. These references to theorists, who have written extensively on the importance of processes of valuation and evaluation in everyday life and for social order, provide a first answer to the question of the actual status of this kind of research. Valuation and evaluation are not only regarded as empirically observable processes, but are moreover found to be fundamental to understanding social order and social action in general.

The emergence of a sociology of valuation and evaluation therefore suggests two things: First, this new field of research comprises a multitude of directly observable phenomena, such as e.g. the valuation of some kind of good as a matter to economic sociologists or the evaluation of universities and academic performance as the research object of sociologists of science and higher education and many more. Second, valuation and evaluation are understood as basic processes that constitute the fundamentals of social order and action. Hence, we do not only have to deal with more or less formalized valuation and evaluation procedures. In addition, recourses on theorists such as Durkheim, Simmel, or Dewey and approaches to analyze different value orders as metrics for justifying and legitimating social action highlight that valuation and evaluation practices are foundational for the constitution of social order and everyday practice, and thus for the social construction of reality. Yet, while first steps become visible that

have begun to demarcate an analytical and theoretical focus, there are still many questions left regarding the analytical delineation of objects of study or the theoretical grounding of relevant processes. In particular, a profound discussion on how to theorize valuation and evaluation is still missing.

In this article, we therefore strive for an approach to conceptualize valuation and evaluation by, first, delineating different analytical concepts, i.e. value, values, value attribution, and value assessment as the objects of study within this new research field. In a second step, we seek to contribute to theory building by developing a conceptualization of valuation as emotional value attribution and evaluation as comparative value assessment. Assuming that value is nothing objectively given, we highlight the role of emotions for answering the question of how value attribution relates to the comparative value assessment of persons, practices, and objects.

Delineating foundational concepts in the sociology of valuation and evaluation

A multitude of studies on most diverse phenomena are subsumed under the label of a sociology of valuation and evaluation, while the actual object of study is not always clearly carved out in analytical or theoretical terms but rather treated as a singular empirical phenomenon. This poses a problem to a comprehensive debate on what this new field of study and its foundational concepts are about. It is therefore necessary, in a first step, to delineate different perspectives and objects of study in the literature on valuation and evaluation and found four key concepts: value, values, value attribution, and value assessment.

The concept of *value* as the worth of persons, practices, ideas, or objects is crucially linked to the process of valuation as *value attribution*. Many studies deal with questions about the attribution of monetary or ideational value. These studies address the problem of how, by whom, and in which situation something becomes regarded as *worthy or worthless*. The focus lies on the social processes of negotiation behind the translation, in particular, of immaterial goods into monetary value. Marion Fourcade (2011a, 2011b) has provided a prominent example for the monetary pricing of immaterial goods where prevalent economic calculations of supply and demand no longer succeed. In her study on oil spill litigations in the US and in France, she depicts how, in different cultural settings, adequate monetary reparations for the pollution of nature are negotiated that aim at pricing an essentially priceless good. Viviana Zelizer (1979, 1985) discusses a similar phenomenon in her studies on the establishment of life insurances and the determination of the monetary value of children. Zelizer shows that in both cases the attribution of ‘profane’ monetary value to ‘sacred’ goods such as human life or children only became possible when the predominant social norms changed. Only when money attribution was no longer regarded as reducing these goods to an economic asset, it was socially accepted to attribute monetary value to these ‘sacred’ goods. The attribution of a monetary value became even to be seen as raising their ideational value. Both, Fourcade and Zelizer thus highlight that the attribution of ‘profane’ monetary value to immaterial ‘sacred’ goods relies on social negotiations. They furthermore demonstrate how these negotiations about a monetary equivalent can increase the awareness for the ideational value of immaterial goods.

Besides the attribution of value, the literature discusses formalized evaluation procedures in terms of the *assessment of value*. Questions focus on how value can be defined and measured to assess and thus to classify how *good or bad* e.g. a university or a hotel has performed and how evaluations themselves affect these performances. In their study on TripAdvisor, an online platform for holiday trips, Susan Scott und Wanda Orlikowski (2012, 2014) claim that such online platforms fit the current need for transparency and immediate accountability. They, however, show that it is an algorithm that is voluntarily kept secret and thus invisible to both evaluators and evaluatees by the operators of the platform, which translates platform users' individual evaluations into one single rating result. This algorithm suggests 'objective' evaluation but lacks transparency in how this judgment has been reached. Such ratings can consequently be used to compare and rank different hotels against each other. This classification has actual consequences. It forces hoteliers and their staff to conform to certain standards that are dictated by the online platform.

Michael Sauder und Wendy Espeland (2009) demonstrate a similar disciplining effect of rankings in their study on the evaluation of US law schools. They analyze how deliberately designed or historically evolved differences between these law schools are levelled out due to overarching evaluation standards. The 'measurement of different entities according to a common metric' (Stevens and Espeland, 2005: 375), called commensuration, is thought of as making differences in quality and performance visible. Yet it simultaneously fosters the assimilation of evaluatees toward pre-given assessment criteria. Such formalized evaluations thus do not simply assess good or bad performance. Moreover, they exert pressure

of assimilation on evaluatees thereby influencing how the world looks like which they are supposed to measure objectively.

Finally, studies that deal with decision-making and the role of normative *values* in terms of orders of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Lamont and Thévenot, 2000) or in terms of institutional logics (Friedland, 2013, 2014, 2017; Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012) are relevant here. Such value orders provide the ground for judging decisions and corresponding actions within a particular situation or context as normatively *right or wrong*. Both concepts have been applied in a variety of case studies, which particularly discuss the co-existence of different value orders and the conflicts that arise from this plurality of values. In their comparative study on two infrastructure projects in the US and France, Thévenot, Moody and Lafaye (2000) analyze how in both cases value that is attributed to nature (which would be harmed through the projects) depends on the specific value order that people apply to justify being in favor or against the respective project. Richard Scott et al. (2000) have highlighted the role of conflicting institutional logics for social change. They depict how at US hospitals the logic of professional dominance that focusses on the best provision of health care has shifted toward a managerial logic that promotes a continuous increasing of economic efficiency in medical practice. The shift in logics induces a consecutive shift in the attribution of value to different actors, practices, and governance structures. Both studies thus focus on the influence of different sets of values on justifying and legitimating decisions and corresponding actions.

While the four concepts of value, values, value attribution, and value assessment, which we have sketched out here, provide a more accurate idea of the objects of study for a sociology of valuation and evaluation, they are still far from an

adequate theoretical conceptualization. By contrasting, first, value with values and, second, valuation with evaluation we therefore seek to approach an understanding of these concepts, their differences, but also their interrelatedness. It is, in particular, the interrelatedness of value and values, and value attribution and assessment that the studies we have presented here address specifically. Zelizer, for instance, analyzes the attribution of value to human life that, however, depends on the presently accepted value order. Scott et al. look into value orders that lead to different ways of attributing value to persons and practices. And the assessment of law schools or hotels, as Sauder and Espeland or Scott and Orlikowski have depicted it, depends on the attribution of value to certain categories that presents them as worthy to be measured.

Value and values

The first issue of 'Valuation Studies' opened the debate on how to theorize valuation with an inquiry among the members of the editorial board about their view on the pivotal issues within a sociology of valuation and evaluation (Kjellberg and Mallard, 2013). Drawing a distinction between value (in singular) and values (in plural) proved fundamental to most statements (Kjellberg and Mallard, 2013: 18f.). One current source for the concern with this analytical differentiation stems from the new economic sociology. When sociologists became interested in the attribution of value to goods, they broke with – what David Stark (2000, 2009) has called – the 'Parsons' pact'. Stark (2000) highlights the longstanding consequences that arose from leaving value to economists while sociologists only cared about social values. Referring to Harrison White (1981, 2002), Stark argues that the attribution of value always depends on social values

and cannot be analyzed separately. The determination of the economic value of goods thus becomes accessible for an economic sociology that no longer regards markets as separate from the social context nor as simply embedded within it. Instead, markets become conceptualized as consisting of social relations from which the valuation of goods arises (Stark, 2000: 2). Stark thus highlights, on the one hand, the differences between economic exchange value and values as the grounds of legitimation for social order. Yet, on the other hand, he demonstrates that both concepts are inseparably interrelated.

Patrick Aspers and Jens Beckert (2011), in addition, have shown that value can have other dimensions besides economic value. They highlight moral or aesthetic value that make goods valuable either independent of their economic value or by directly affecting it (Aspers and Beckert, 2011: 6). They thereby make a similar point as do Zelizer and Fourcade (see above) about other forms of value besides economic value. All of these authors, furthermore, draw on Georg Simmel, who, in the introduction to his 'Philosophy of Money' (Simmel, 1978 [1900]), discussed the role of value in the subjective construction of meaning. Simmel claims that value is central to a meaningful interpretation of subjective experience: 'Man macht sich selten klar, daß unser ganzes Leben (...) in Wertgefühlen und Wertabwägungen verläuft und überhaupt nur dadurch Sinn und Bedeutung bekommt, daß die mechanisch abrollenden Elemente der Wirklichkeit über ihren Sachverhalt hinaus unendlich mannigfaltige Maße und Arten von Wert für uns besitzen' (Simmel, 1978 [1900]: 25).¹ For Simmel, value is, first and foremost, not the price of something. Instead, the attribution of value is a first classification of experience. He therefore regards the attribution of value as foundational to the perception of reality because it provides meaning to subjective experiences. We

can thus say that value, in the singular, exists in multiple forms. We can speak of the economic, moral, aesthetic, or emotional value of something and ask fruitful questions about how these forms of value interrelate.

A similar multiplicity can be found with respect to values in the plural. Values in terms of social norms have also – in contrast to thoughts by Émile Durkheim (1983 [1897]) and Talcott Parsons (1935) on a universal value system – become regarded as simultaneously existing in different ways interacting with each other. The sociology of critique draws on different strands of philosophical theory that each promotes a different principle of equivalence (Boltanski und Thévenot, 1999, 2006). Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot delineate six normative premises (the world of inspiration, the domestic world, the world of renown, the civic world, the market world, the industrial world), which as orders of worth allow for justifications of different ways of actions. In sociological new institutionalism, the idea of different value orders has cumulated in the concept of institutional logics understood as ‘a set of material practices and symbolic constructions’ (Friedland and Alford, 1991: 248) that are based on metaphysically given institutional substances² (Friedland, 2013, 2017; Friedland et al., 2014). For Western-capitalist societies Roger Friedland and Robert Alford (1991) detect the capitalist market, the bureaucratic state, democracy, nuclear family, and Christian religion as the five central institutions that each has an institutional logic as its organizing principle. Both concepts share the idea that value orders enable social order because they allow for the justification and legitimation of determinate ways of action. Both theoretical perspectives also focus on the consequences of plurality and thus on conflict that can arise between different value orders. While Boltanski and Thévenot propose this heterarchy (Lamont, 2012; Stark, 2009) as facilitating

reflexivity and critique, Friedland and Alford (1991) as well as Stark (2009) highlight conflicting value orders as enabling social change or creativity.

To summarize, for sharpening the analytical focus of a sociology of valuation and evaluation it is helpful to differentiate between value and values. While value as worthiness constitutes a particular property of persons, practices, ideas and objects, values are moral virtues that are built into social norms and are thus objects themselves. Beyond their differentiation, we find that value and values are closely linked to one another. Ideas about what is valuable depend on predominant social values, while, similarly, social values need to be recognized as valuable to achieve normative power.

Value attribution and value assessment

The current debate tends to see value assessment based on comparison or comparing as the foundational practice for valuation and evaluation (see Heintz, 2010, 2016). On the one hand, value assessment understood as evaluation refers to a practice in which elements of equal rank are rendered amenable to evaluation within a specific category. Online travel platforms can serve as an example, when hotels that are of equal rank (say: three star hotels) are brought into a hierarchical order according to user reviews (Jeacle and Carter, 2011; Scott and Orlikowski, 2012). On the other hand, evaluation refers to a practice in which dissimilar elements are rendered comparable and (as a consequence) amenable to evaluation by classifying them. In this case, evaluation is based on processes that equalize, in order to allow for comparability (Espeland and Stevens, 1998). University rankings can serve as an example (Espeland and Sauder, 2007) as well as what Fourcade and Healy have called ‘market classifications’ (Fourcade and Healy,

2013). The latter equalize actors on markets by representing them as data on their past market behavior. This allows for classifying them according to their credit-worthiness, with the purpose of producing a hierarchical order of future customers.

This is to say that work in the sociology of valuation and evaluation has been productive when operating under the assumption that evaluation is fundamentally rooted in practices of comparing. We see however that there is current and productive work that highlights not only practices of comparative value assessment but also practices in which value is attributed or created. Lamont (2012), Vatin (2013), or Kjellberg and Mallard (2013) similarly refer to two basic processes. Lamont distinguishes between valuation as ‘giving worth or value’ and evaluation as ‘assessing how an entity attains a certain type of worth’ (Lamont, 2012: 205). She therefore delineates value attribution from value assessment.³ From a Marxist perspective, Francois Vatin differentiates ‘valorizing’ as the ‘production of value’ from ‘evaluating’ as the ‘assessment of value’ (Vatin, 2013: 31). He thus also defines two processes, one in which value emerges and one in which value is measured. Kjellberg and Mallard see a commonly shared baseline that refers to valuation as “world-making and sense-making practices” (Kjellberg and Mallard, 2013: 20). Valuation is thereby either understood as a process that classifies objects and persons by aligning them in a specific hierarchical order or it is more fundamentally regarded as generating meaning and constructing reality. In her answer to Kjellberg and Mallard, Diane-Laure Arjaliès emphasizes that ‘valuation aims to *signify* the world rather than accurately account for it’ (Kjellberg and Mallard, 2013: 18). She thus regards valuation less as a process of judging the world than of contributing to its social construction.

Most of this resonates with John Dewey's distinction between processes of value attribution and value assessment as 'prizing' and 'appraisal' (Dewey, 1939). Dewey interprets 'prizing' as subjectively holding precious, '[f]or in prizing, emphasis falls upon something having definite *personal* reference, which, like all activities of distinctively personal reference, has an aspectual quality called emotional' (Dewey, 1939: 5). He thus emphasizes the role of emotions in the attribution of value to objects and persons. 'Appraisal', in his terms, means 'a relational property of objects so that an intellectual aspect is uppermost of the same general sort that is found in *'estimate'* as distinguished from the personal-emotional word *'esteem'*' (Dewey, 1939: 5). Contrary to prizing, Dewey defines appraisal as an intellectual process that always needs to be done based on a comparison.

In sum, all these different conceptions of crucial processes within the sociology of valuation and evaluation highlight a basic analytical differentiation between the attribution of value and the assessment of it. However, Dewey has sought to advance the understanding of value attribution and value assessment in everyday practice one step further. His theoretical concept of a 'value judgment' (Dewey, 2004 [1916]: 223ff.) is based on the idea that these two processes cannot be separated from each other. He finds that the prizing of particular ends cannot be separated from the appraisal of means. Instead, the prizing of ends always depends on the appraisal of the means that are necessary for reaching them under the specific circumstances of a particular situation. He thus distinguishes 'desired' ends from ends that are, indeed, 'desirable' because of the characteristics of the means one needs to employ for reaching them (Dewey, 1939: 31f.). Every

attribution of value to certain ends therefore depends on the assessment of the necessary means.

Yet while Dewey proposes that the prizing of ends depends on the appraisal of means, questions occur about the prizing of the criteria for their appraisal. How do the criteria for the assessment of value attain themselves value?

The role of emotions in value attribution and value assessment

In practices of assessing an object against a given standard or other objects it is generally implied that the compared objects are attributed some value. The attribution of value can therefore be a consequence of assessing objects through comparison. However, a comparison also presupposes that the objects of the comparison have received value just from being selected for the value assessment. They are worthy to be compared. The same holds for the categories (or criteria) along which the assessment takes place. They are worthy categories along which objects can be compared. Value assessment thus rests on objects and categories being attributed the value of being worthy of comparison. This attribution, again, rests in an antecedent comparison of objects and categories. Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star (1999) as well as Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy (2013) have demonstrated in the cases of health care and credit ratings that the construction of classificatory systems already decides about which kind of value is assessed. The emergence of categories for evaluation is thus – as Durkheim (1954 [1912]) has already shown regarding the categories ‘profane’ and ‘sacred’ in his study on the elementary forms of religious life – not only constitutive for evaluation processes but is furthermore based itself on the attribution of value. In this way, processes of attributing and assessing value are closely linked.

Such an analytical distinction is consequential in that it suggests contrasting and expanding questions regarding the assessment of value with questions regarding the attribution of value. As a first step to such a conceptualization, we aim to show why the attribution of value has to be seen as of equal importance as the assessment of value.

As we have already shown, the distinction between a valuative attribution and an evaluative assessment through comparison can already be found in the work of Simmel as ‘Wertgefühl’ [value emotions] and ‘Wertabwägung’ [value assessment], as well as in the work of Dewey as ‘prizing’ and ‘appraisal’. In both cases, attribution and assessment of value are of equal importance. Furthermore, in following Simmel and Dewey, we suggest that the attribution of value must be understood as a process expressed through emotions.

Reclaiming emotions as central to social theory has to surmount a development in sociology throughout the 20th century in which themes of emotion have been either relegated or confined to the subdiscipline of the sociology of emotions. Jack Barbalet (2004) has pointed to a rationalistic bias stemming from the reception of Max Weber in sociology that led to a devaluation of emotions as explanation for social action in numerous theoretical traditions. ‘This idea, that emotion is a social cause, is more likely to be resisted by sociologists than the idea that it is a social effect’ (Barbalet, 2004: 9). For this reason, sociological arguments that propose emotions as social causes are restricted to the sociology of emotions or, worse, left to other disciplines, e.g., social psychology. Thus, the current sociology of valuation and evaluation still draws from theorists like Simmel or Dewey, however, as a result of this development, some of their premises regarding the role of emotion in (e)valuation have been silently dropped.

Yet this comes at a price, which we think is worth considering. What has been lost, first, is the focus on the dynamic interplay of emotional attribution and comparative assessment of value. This has led, second, to limiting the (future) contribution of the sociology of valuation and evaluation with regard to more general questions of social theory. On the basis of an analytical distinction between attribution and assessment of value that allows for addressing foundational questions in social theory, reference to the (re)established sociology of emotions (Bericat, 2016) and to the role of emotions in constructing the social and social action thus seem indispensable (Barbalet, 2004).

Simmel refers to subjective value emotions ('Wertgefühle'), while Dewey sees 'prizing' as an expression of subjective wishes and interests that are present in the form of emotions. For Simmel and Dewey to draw this distinction in a very similar fashion relates to the role emotions play in their general social theory. For Dewey, the pragmatist tradition and especially the concept of emotions from William James come into play. James famously not only saw emotions as a central cause of action but also rejected the view that emotionality and rationality are distinct, but rather form a continuum. Emotions, thus, become a genuinely foundational category. James speaks of a 'sentiment of rationality' (Barbalet, 2004: 26ff.; James, 1896). As a result, any form of social action or practice is thought of as determined by emotions, in which Dewey mainly stresses the role of emotions in the attribution of value.

For Simmel emotions are also foundational for the social. He claims that (e)valuation happens in a continuous flow of perception as an interplay of emotional attributions and comparative assessments of value that form the core of how social meaning is constructed (Simmel, 1978 [1900]: 62). He furthermore

distinguishes primary emotions, that cause interactions, and secondary emotions, that are caused by interactions (Gerhards, 1986: 903). As such they form the connecting element within his general theoretical approach that centers on the trias of society, culture, and personality (Featherstone, 1991; Gerhards, 1986: 920ff.).

Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss (1963: 50ff.) also emphasize the role of emotions in practices of classification. Objects are attributed value, e.g., in terms such as ‘sacred’ or ‘profane’, according to the sentiments of a social group towards them. These sentiments are crucial for relating objects to each other putting them into a classificatory order. Contrary to these ‘natural classifications’ based on the ‘fluid’, ‘inconsistent’, and even ‘contagious’ emotional attribution of value, they find ‘logical classifications’ through ‘precisely marked’ and ‘clearly determined’ concepts. From an anthropological perspective, Durkheim and Mauss regard the rise of such ‘scientific’ classifications as the dominant mode of classification as a process of societal development in which social emotionality has lost its place in structuring social order while reflexive thought has gained center stage. However, they find that the idea of classification as fundamental for social order is the permanent legacy of the role emotions have played and continue to play in developing our understanding of social structure.

In light of the many contributions from economic sociology within the sociology of (e)valuation and its focus on the attribution of value to all sorts of goods, Barbalet’s suggestion to revisit the work of Adam Smith seems another promising approach to highlight the role emotions play in processes of value attribution and assessment. Even though Smith is mostly read for his ‘The Wealth of Nations’ (Smith, 1981[1776]) as a classic in economic sociology and economics, the

theoretical context in which economic action is of interest to Smith receives far less attention. Social action in the realm of the economy embodies a specific emotion, i.e. 'self-love' or 'self-interest', that is of decisive importance for his earlier work on 'The Theory of Moral Sentiments' (Smith, 2004[1759]). His theoretical argument posits that the foundation of the social is provided by emotions, such as compassion, that are directed towards other people. Emotions that are directed towards the self, such as self-interest, stand opposed. These self-directed emotions are problematic for Smith, as he ascribes them a desintegrative effect on society. The emotional impulse for economic action, self-interest or in heightened form greed, can thus become a social problem.

These fundamental assumptions on the role of emotions for social action provide the starting point for Smith's economic perspective. Value results from practical moral judgements that rest, in the last instance, on emotional reactions to specific situations (Thacher, 2016: 99). (E)valuation as a moral judgment is, however, not subjected to the fuzziness or inconsistency of elusive feelings, but rests on a reflexive emotional process that is characterized by intersubjectivity and reciprocity. We are capable of imagining a situation through the perspective of others, for which Smith conceptualizes the 'impartial spectator' (Smith, 2004 [1759]: 30). As a personification of reason within ourselves, the impartial spectator is thought of as emotionally caused: 'When the happiness or misery of others depends in any respect upon our conduct, we dare not, as self-love might suggest to us, prefer the interest of one to that of many. The man within immediately calls to us, that we value ourselves too much and other people too little, and that, by doing so, we render ourselves the proper object of the contempt and indignation of our brethren' (Smith, 2004 [1759]: 159). Reason therefore

forces us to a comparative assessment of our own worth compared to that of others and, in consequence, balances our self-attribution of worth.

Revisiting Smith's work may serve as a reminder that, on the one hand, the attribution of value is inherently an emotional practice. On the other hand, the emotional basis of (e)valuation practices is not limited to evaluation but extends to all forms of social action. Highlighting emotions is thus a theoretical strategy to link the sociology of valuation and evaluation to topics in social theory in general. It also provides a more comprehensive path for linking classical work on value and valuation from the past to the vibrant debate on (e)valuation practices in the present.

Following from such a theoretical perspective of an emotional attribution of value, a requirement for empirical research then needs to be paying increasing attention to how emotions play a decisive role in the attribution of value and how this affects value assessment. The role of self-directed emotions has already been discussed tentatively in the context of research on scientific peer review, yet, in both directions: emotions as the basis for value judgments as well as their result. Trust and confidence are identified as key emotional elements of scientific (e)valuation practices. For (e)valuative practices the evocation of confidence in reviewers is a precondition for action in that giving an explicit review requires confidence in one's capabilities of giving the correct assessment and in not being sanctioned for an incorrect assessment (Lamont, 2009; Reinhart et al., 2018). Friedhelm Neidhardt has emphasized that emotions of collegiality in the selection of reviewers for the German Research Foundation (DFG) in the subsequent (e)valuation can explain why reviewers tend to avoid or relativize criticism towards the reviewed scientists (Neidhardt, 1988: 118ff.). Furthermore, review

panels in science are also shaped by emotions of collegiality: Stefan Hirschauer (2010) describes emotionally charged situations of interactions between reviewers and Mallard et al. (2009) interpret the attribution and assurance of fairness in panels as 'emotion work'. Also, peer review keeps in check the emotions that emerge from attribution of scientific value. Pacifying mechanisms not only ensure collegiality but also affirm the trust in the individuals that are involved in scientific (e)valuation and the (e)valuation processes in general (Reinhart, 2010: 170ff.)

Other cases in point are e.g. practices that aim at increasing the worth of one's body: Jewelry, fashion, tattoos, sport, wellness are not only practices to enhance social status and value in the eyes of others, but serve also to enhance emotions and feelings of self-worth (Matthäus, 2014). Latest work by Luc Boltanski and Arnaud Esquerre (2016) can also serve as an example for such a perspective. They describe a social change that leads more and more to things being valued for their individual and incomparable properties. Objects are enhanced by stories and emotions to make them 'Liebhaberobjekte', i.e. things for aficionados. In an 'enrichment economy', work and consumption are not primarily expressions of practices of comparison and calculation in relation to a market; rather, they express desire and passion in practices of collecting and enriching.

Andreas Reckwitz, in his recent book on 'Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten' [The Society of Singularities] (Reckwitz, 2017), also conceptualizes the relation of valuation and emotions. He finds that valuation depends on charging with emotions. Only those objects, persons, ideas, and practices that stimulate emotions in others can become valued as singular, i.e., as special beyond comparison

(Reckwitz, 2017: 83). This process of singularization has become – as Reckwitz argues – the predominant principle of contemporary society.

These recent studies highlight situations of (e)valuation in which the attribution of value takes precedent over its assessment. Individual objects receive value from being selected for assessment or from being selected as criteria for assessment. Such attribution rests on the unconditional desire and esteem resulting from subjective emotions of value.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have sought to contribute to theory-building in the currently booming field of a sociology of valuation and evaluation. We have started out with delineating the objects of study and have found four crucial concepts that relevant literature of the field deals with: Besides the distinction between (1) *value* in terms of worthiness that constitutes a particular property of persons, practices, ideas, and objects and (2) *values* understood as moral virtues that are built into social norms and are thus objects themselves, we have shown that also the distinction between (3) valuations that depend on the process of an emotion-based *attribution of value* to persons, practices, ideas, and objects, and (4) evaluations that are based on comparative *value assessments* provides fruitful insights. It not only allows for addressing the consequences of (e)valuation but also for shedding light on the foundations of (e)valuation in highlighting the selection of criteria and objects as integral parts of (e)valuation practices. Delineating these objects of study, we have, furthermore, demonstrated that beyond more or less formalized valuation and evaluation procedures, the underlying processes of value attribution and value assessment are foundational for social order and social action. The

sociology of valuation and evaluation should therefore not only pay more attention to emotions in (e)valuation practices, but could thereby also contribute to general questions of social theory.

Acknowledgements

...

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1 ‘We are rarely aware of the fact that our whole life, from the point of view of consciousness, consists in experiencing and judging values, and that it acquires meaning and significance only from the fact that the mechanically unfolding elements of reality possess an infinite variety of values beyond their objective substance.’ (Simmel, 1978 [1900]: 62)

2 Friedland refers to Aristotle’s term ‘substance’ because he finds that an institutional substance such as capitalism is neither objectively given nor subjectively attributed value. Instead, it is based on practices such as property accumulation that are valuated through the metaphysical belief in capitalism but, at the same, value this belief through its enactment: ‘Institutional logics are founded neither in subjects nor objects, neither in the will or reason of a subject, nor the material constraints of objects and tools, but metaphysically in what I have

referred to not as value, but through the category of institutional substance. Institutional substances are values, or rather institutional objects valorized through practice. I use this Aristotelian term to try to capture the way in which institutional logics are organized around a deep ontology, depending on valued institutional objects which do not exist as such, whether it be sovereignty, knowledge, art, property, love or God. We cannot but live in a metaphysical world, although we do not recognize it as such. In each institutional logic a substance is both the basis of the identity of the subject and of the ontology of the objects deployed in her practice, the metaphysical ground of subjectification and objectification.” (Friedland et al., 2014: 2)

3 Lamont refers to the Oxford English Dictionary that defines ‘to evaluate’ as “‘to ‘reckon up’, ascertain the amount of; to express in terms of something already known’” (Lamont, 2012: fn. 3).

References

- Aspers P and Beckert J 2011 Value in Markets. In: Beckert J and Aspers P (eds) *The Worth of Goods. Valuation and Pricing in the Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–38.
- Barbalet JM 2004 *Emotion, Social Theory & Structure: A Macrosociological Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Beckert J 2011 The Transcending Power of Goods: Imaginative Value in the Economy. In: Beckert J and Aspers P (eds) *The Worth of Goods. Valuation and Pricing in the Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 106–28.
- Beckert J and Rössel J 2013 The Price of Art: Uncertainty and Reputation in the Art Field. *European Societies* 15(2):178–95.
- Bericat E 2016 The Sociology of Emotions: Four Decades of Progress. *Current Sociology* 64(3):491–513.
- Boltanski L and Esquerre A 2016 The Economic Life of Things. *New Left Review* (98):31–54.
- Boltanski L and Thévenot L 1999 The Sociology of Critical Capacity. *European Journal of Social Theory* 2(3):359–77.
- Boltanski L and Thévenot L 2006 *On Justification: Economies of Worth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bowker G and Star SL 1999 *Sorting Things out: Classification and its Consequences*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Cefaï D, Zimmermann B, Nicolae S, and Endreß M 2015 Introduction. *Human Studies* 38(1):1–12.
- Dewey J 2004 [1916] *Essays in Experimental Logic*. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications.
- Dewey J 1939 *Theory of Valuation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Durkheim E 1983 [1897] *Suicide. A Study in Sociology*. New York: Routledge.
- Durkheim E 1954 [1912] *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. London: Allen & Unwin.

- Durkheim E and Mauss M 1963 *Primitive Classification*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Espeland WN and Sauder M 2007 Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds. *American Journal of Sociology* 113(1):1–40.
- Espeland WN and Stevens ML 1998 Commensuration as a Social Process. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24(1):313–43.
- Espeland WN and Sauder M 2016 *Engines of Anxiety. Academic Rankings, Reputation, and Accountability*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Featherstone M 1991 Georg Simmel: An Introduction. *Theory, Culture & Society* 8(3):1–16.
- Fourcade M 2011a Cents and Sensibility: Economic Valuation and the Nature of ‘Nature’. *American Journal of Sociology* 116(6):1721–77.
- Fourcade M 2011b Price and Prejudice: On Economics, and the Enchantment/Disenchantment of Nature. In: Beckert J and Aspers P (eds) *The Worth of Goods. Valuation and Pricing in the Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.41–62.
- Fourcade M and Healy K 2013 Classification Situations: Life-Chances in the Neoliberal Era. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 38(8):559–572.
- Friedland R and Alford R 1991 Bringing Society Back: Symbols, Practices and Institutional Contradictions. In: Powell W and DiMaggio (eds) *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp.232–63.

- Friedland R 2013 God, Love, and Other Good Reasons for Practice. In: Boxenbaum E and Lounsbury M (eds) *Institutional Logics in Action, Research in the Sociology of Organizations*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing, pp. 25–50.
- Friedland R, Mohr JW, Roose H, and Gardinali P 2014 The Institutional Logics of Love: Measuring Intimate Life. *Theory and Society* 43(3-4):333–70.
- Friedland R 2017 The Value of Institutional Logics. In: Krücken G, Mazza C, Meyer R, and Walgenbach P (eds) *New Themes in Institutional Analysis. Topics and Issues from European Research*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp.12-50.
- Gerhards J 1986 Georg Simmel's Contribution to a Theory of Emotions. *Social Science Information* 25(4):901–24.
- Heintz B 2010 Numerische Differenz. Überlegungen zu einer Soziologie des (quantitativen) Vergleichs. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 39(3):162–81
- Heintz B 2016 Wir leben im Zeitalter der Vergleichen. Perspektiven einer Soziologie des Vergleichs." *Zeitschrift Für Soziologie* 45(5).
- Helgesson CF and Muniesa F 2013 For What it's Worth: An Introduction to Valuation Studies. *Valuation Studies* 1(1):1–10.
- Hirschauer S 2010 Editorial Judgments: A Praxeology of 'Voting' in Peer Review. *Social Studies of Science* 40(1):71–103.
- Hood K 2017 The Science of Value: Economic Expertise and the Valuation of Human Life in US Federal Regulatory Agencies." *Social Studies of Science* 47(4):441–65.

- Hutter M and Stark D 2015 Pragmatist Perspectives on Valuation: An Introduction. In: Antal AB, Hutter M, and Stark D (eds) *Moments of Valuation. Exploring Sites of Dissonance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 4–16.
- Hutter M and Throsby D 2008 *Beyond Price: Value in Culture, Economics, and the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- James W 1896 *The Sentiment of Rationality*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.
- Jeacle I and Carter C 2011 In TripAdvisor We Trust: Rankings, Calculative Regimes and Abstract Systems. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 36(4-5):293–309.
- Kjellberg H and Mallard A 2013 Valuation Studies? Our Collective Two Cents. *Valuation Studies* 1(1):11–30.
- Karpik L 2010 *Valuing the Unique: The Economics of Singularities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Krueger AK and Reinhart M 2017 Theories of Valuation – Building Blocks for Conceptualizing Valuation between Practice and Structure. *Historical Social Research* 42(1):263–85.
- Lamont M and Thévenot L (eds) 2000 *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lamont M 2009 *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Lamont M 2012 Toward a Comparative Sociology of Valuation and Evaluation. *Annual Review of Sociology* 38:201–221.
- Mallard G, Lamont M, and Guetzkow J 2009 Fairness as Appropriateness: Negotiating Epistemological Differences in Peer Review. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 34(5):573–606.
- Matthäus S 2014 Was strukturiert eigentlich der Habitus? Oder, der wertende Selbst-/Weltbezug als eigentliches tertium comparationis der verschiedenen Habitusformen. *Sozialer Sinn* 15(2):219–51.
- Meer N and Lamont M 2016 Michèle Lamont: A Portrait of a Capacious Sociologist. *Sociology* 50(5):1012–22.
- De Munck J and Zimmermann B 2015 Evaluation as Practical Judgment. *Human Studies* 38(1):113–35.
- Muniesa F 2011 A Flank Movement in the Understanding of Valuation. *The Sociological Review* 59(s2):24–38.
- Neidhardt F 1988 *Selbststeuerung in der Forschungsförderung: Das Gutachterwesen der DFG*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Orlikowski WJ and Scott SV 2014 What Happens When Evaluation Goes Online? *Organization Science* 25(3):868–91.
- Parsons T 1935 The Place of Ultimate Values in Sociological Theory. *Ethics* 45(3):282–316.
- Reckwitz A 2017 *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Reinhart M 2010 *Soziologie und Epistemologie des Peer Review*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Reinhart M, Hesselmann F, and Krueger AK 2018 Nach der Bewertung ist vor der Bewertung – Sichtbarkeit und Emotionalität als verbindende Elemente von Bewertungsprozessen. In: Endreß M, Bischur D, Nicolae S, and Berli O (eds) *Soziologie des Wertens und Bewertens*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 125-145.

Sauder M and Espeland WN 2009 The Discipline of Rankings: Tight Coupling and Organizational Change. *American Sociological Review* 74(1):63–82.

Scott WR, Ruef M, Mendel PJ, and Caronna CA (eds) 2000 *Institutional Change and Healthcare Organizations: From Professional Dominance to Managed Care*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Scott SV and Orlikowski WJ 2012 Reconfiguring Relations of Accountability: Materialization of Social Media in the Travel Sector. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 37(1):26–40.

Simmel G 1978 [1900] *The Philosophy of Money*. New York: Routledge.

Smith A 2004 [1759] *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith A 1981 [1776]. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Indianapolis: Liberty Press.

Stark D 2000 For a Sociology of Worth. Working Paper. Available at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4594/54a59fef8ed0db99549c5f7a2a8c26f7cf99.pdf> (accessed 19 June 2018).

Stark D 2009 *The Sense of Dissonance: Accounts of Worth in Economic Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stevens ML and Espeland WN 2005 Commensuration. In: *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, pp. 375–78.

Thacher D 2016 The Perception of Value: Adam Smith on the Moral Role of Social Research.” *European Journal of Social Theory* 19(1):94–110.

Thornton PH, Ocasio W, and Lounsbury M 2012 *The Institutional Logics Perspective: A New Approach to Culture, Structure, and Process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thévenot L, Moody M, and Lafaye C 2000 Forms of Valuing Nature: Arguments and Modes of Justification in French and American Environmental Disputes. In: Lamont M and Thevenot L (eds) *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology*, edited by. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 229–72.

Vatin F 2013 Valuation as Evaluating and Valorizing. *Valuation Studies* 1(1):31–50.

White HC 1981 Where Do Markets Come From? *American Journal of Sociology* 87(3):517–47.

White HC 2002 *Markets from Networks: Socioeconomic Models of Production*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Zelizer VA 1979 *Morals and Markets. The Development of Life Insurance in the United States*. New Brunswick: Transaction.

Zelizer VA 1985 *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Zelizer VA 2011 *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.