

Anderson's spheres

1 Anderson's theory of value

"... the concepts of meriting valuation and being properly valued are rationality concepts. When we wonder whether something is appropriately valued, we wonder whether *we* would be making sense in valuing it. On my view, the investigation into what is worth our caring about is a quest for self-understanding, an attempt to make sense of our own valuational responses to the world. In §5.1, I will tie the project of rational self-understanding to social practices of justification. ... The link between self-understanding and justification is provided by the fact that valuations are expressive states. They are bearers of meanings and subject to interpretation. Since meanings are public, I can understand my own attitudes only in terms that make sense to others. Attitudes are also partly constituted by norms that determine their proper objects. ... I will argue that people interpret and justify their valuations by exchanging reasons for them with the aim of reaching a common point of view from which others can achieve and reflectively endorse one another's valuations. To judge that one's valuations make sense is to judge that they would be endorsed from that hypothetical point of view. To be rational is to be suitably responsive to reasons offered by those attempting to reach that point of view." (Anderson, 1993, p. 3)

1.1 Value and expression

"To value or care about something in a particular way involves a complex of standards for perception, emotion, deliberation, desire, and conduct that *express* and thereby communicate one's regard for the object's importance. To love someone involves the performance of many actions which express that love, which show the beloved that he or she has a special importance to the lover." (Anderson, 1993, p. 11)

1.2 Expression and action (or policy)

"An expressive theory defines rational action as action that adequately expresses our rational attitudes toward people and other intrinsically valuable things. According to the rational attitude theory of value, something is valuable if and only if it is rational for someone to value it, to assume a favorable attitude toward it. And to adequately

care about something requires that one express one's valuations in the world, to embody them in some social reality. This is a demand of self-understanding." (Anderson, 1993, p. 17)

1.3 Value and social practices

"Individuals are not self-sufficient in their capacity to value things in different ways. I am capable of valuing something in a particular way only in a social setting that upholds norms for that mode of valuation. I cannot honor someone outside a social context in which certain actions, gestures, and manners of speaking are commonly understood to express honor. More important, I do not adequately express my honor for another unless others recognize my honor as appropriate. To care about something in a distinctive way, one must participate in a social practice of valuation governed by norms for its sensible expression.

So the difference between, for example, appreciating something and using it lies in the social relations and norms within which we produce, maintain, distribute, preserve, and enjoy or otherwise realize the value of that thing. To realize a good as a particular *kind* of good we place it in a particular matrix of social relations." (Anderson, 1993, p. 12)

1.4 Value and objectivity

"There are almost no constraints on what may be sensibly liked. But there are significant constraints on what can be a sensible object of other modes of valuation, such as love, respect, or admiration. It doesn't make sense to admire musical performances for being sloppy, humdrum, or out of tune. It doesn't make sense to respect people for being servile, immature, petty, or sleazy. It doesn't make sense to romantically love heartless people. ... [My theory] says that what is valuable is the object of a rational favorable attitude, not the object of just any favorable attitude. If mere likings are not subject to rational criticism, they are not rational, but arational. Their objects, therefore, lie only at the margins of the good." (Anderson, 1993, p. 92)

2 Ethical limits of the market (ch. 7)

2.1 Method

Describe an *ideal type* of the social relations surrounding the production, distribution, and enjoyment of a good (p. 146). E.g. the ideal type of a market good is one

whose value is better embodied by norms with the following features than it is embodied by the norms from another sphere. Market goods are appropriately produced, distributed, and enjoyed by people following norms that are: impersonal, egoistic, exclusive, want-regarding, and oriented to 'exit' rather than 'voice' (p. 145).

The analysis may be accurate even if there are no *pure* market goods. E.g. doctors sell their services but are also governed by a professional code of ethics or people buy things mostly for their families, rather than their own, egoistic, uses.

2.2 Freedom and autonomy

Freedom = having access to a wide range of significant options to express diverse valuations. Autonomy = confident self-government. (Anderson, 1993, pp. 140-1)

Limits to ownership or alienability.

1. Civil rights laws and businesses. Protects autonomy (p. 142).
2. Limits on alienation of labor. Protects freedom (p. 142).

2.3 Professions

When professionals are employed by profit-making firms, they can be pressed to act according to market, rather than professional, norms. E.g. Doctors and unnecessary procedures (for those who can pay) or inferior care (for those who can't) (p. 148)

2.4 Personal relations

1. Gift vs. market exchange (pp. 150-2).
2. Non-paid sex vs. legalized prostitution; leads to society in which "[w]omen's sexuality is still valued as male property", even outside of overtly commercial relationships (p. 155).
3. Contracts for division of labor within the family; these threaten to "undermine the goods of commitment and intimacy proper to marriage" (p. 157).

What's wrong? Treats a *personal gift* value as an *impersonal* value and treats a *shared* good (coupledom) as a *divisible* one.

2.5 Political goods

1. Public roads (p. 160)
2. Public parks (p. 161)
3. Public schools (p. 161–3)

What's wrong with privatization, reduced political control? Loss of individual freedom, loss of fraternal relations with fellow citizens *via* move from voice to exit, schools should be governed by voice because they are where future citizens are trained.

2.6 Summary of the argument

“... the market can claim superior efficiency only when goods are unchanged by alternate means of provision. Gift values are undermined when they are produced and exchanged out of market motives, for their significance consists in part in their expression of non-market attitudes. Shared values can be realized only through nonexclusive distribution responsive to shared understandings of principles and needs arrived at through voice. In treating human relations as indifferently substitutable means for acquiring goods, welfare economics blinds itself to the ways markets undermine certain expressive relations with others.” (Anderson, 1993, p. 166)

3 Further reading

The topic of “commodification” is a large one. Organ sales are especially hot at the moment, for instance. Here is a selected bibliography on this topic.

- Anderson, E. (1993). *Value in ethics and economics*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass..Anderson discusses two specific cases in more depth than the ones in the chapter we read. These are commercial surrogacy and cost-benefit analysis.
- Anderson, E. S. (1999). What is the point of equality?. *Ethics*, 109(2):287-337. Criticism of luck egalitarianism, such as in Dworkin.
- Arrow, K. J. (1972). Gifts and exchanges. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1(4):343–362. Criticism of Titmuss.
- Arrow, K. J. (1997). Invaluable goods. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 35(2):757–765. Review of Radin by an eminent economist.

- Barry, B. (1995). Spherical justice and global injustice. In Miller, D. and Walzer, M., editors, *Pluralism, justice, and equality*, pages 67-80. Oxford University Press, Oxford. Criticism of Walzer's theory, especially its apparent relativism.
- Hirschman, A. O. (2004). *Exit, voice, and loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass..A marvelous piece of social theory that Anderson draws heavily from.
- Posner, R. A. (1985). An economic theory of the criminal law. *Columbia Law Review*, 85(6):1193-1231. Criminal law is thought to be an especially hard area for plausible economic analyses of our values. Anderson criticizes this article on page 155.
- Radin, M. J. (1982). Property and personhood. *Stanford Law Review*, 34(5):957-1015. Radin and Anderson have similar concerns about markets.
- Radin, M. J. (1986). Residential rent control. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 15(4):350-380.
- Radin, M. J. (1987). Market-inalienability. *Harvard Law Review*, 100(8):1849-1937.
- Radin, M. J. (2001). *Contested Commodities*. Harvard University Press. Discusses prostitution, baby selling, free expression, compensation (for takings of property?), and democracy..
- Titmuss, R. M. (1971). *The gift relationship: from human blood to social policy*. Pantheon Books, New York. Makes the case for a distinction between gifts and commodities, especially with regard to blood donation.
- Waldron, J. (1995). Money and complex equality. In Miller, D. and Walzer, M., editors, *Pluralism, justice, and equality*, pages 144-170. Oxford University Press, Oxford. Critical review of Walzer. Several points seem relevant to Anderson's views.
- Walzer, M. (1983). *Spheres of Justice*. Basic Books, New York. The source for the idea of spheres.

