VALUES AND DEVELOPMENT: SOME REFLECTIONS

THAM SEONG CHEE

FOREWORD

I am pleased to write this short foreword to introduce the Department's Seminar and Occasional Papers Series. The series provides the opportunity for staff members of the Department as well as scholars of Malay Studies in general to have their research findings on Malay subjects made known to a wider audience. It is also hoped that this initiative will provide the avenue for a beneficial exchange of ideas and viewpoints on Malay issues between town and gown.

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1. Prologue

In the tradition of Max Weber (1956) enquiry into values have centred on their meaning and place in social science research: the question whether social science research can be value free (wertfreiheit). The concern with the implications of values on social science research was a direct reaction on Weber's part to Marx's idea that objective forces determine all sociological praxis, hence implicitly discounting subjective valuational factors. Marx's philosophy of the social sciences was a refraction of the positivistic persuasion that social science statements cannot be objective until and unless they meet with the investigative procedures associated with the natural sciences. Subsequent debate on values and their place in social science research was to reject the positivistic stance as being inadequate even misconceived. Weber, and later Popper (1945) accepted the full reality of values in sociological praxis as well as theorization, arguing in the case of the latter that research without due consideration of the value dimension will produce "only a mere heap of entirely unconnected statements". The positivist's theoretical-methodological inclination amounted no less to a repudiation of the phenomenological position that all human acts are value-intended whether it is in the acquisition of pleasure, utility, the preservation of life, art and salvation. (Max Scheler, 1980). Values then, suffuse all perception and thinking whether viewed from the theoretical-methodological point of view or from the point of view of sociological praxis. In other words, values should be understood as both epistemology (the theory of knowledge with regard to its methods and validation) and ontology (the nature of being).

2. Values as Sociological Praxis

Enquiries into values have been to assume their separate or distinct character and existence from each other. Thus values are categorized into economic values, political values, moral-ethical values, religious values, cultural values, aesthetic values etc.

Sometimes, values are understood in the mundane sense to describe simply a measure or quantum of worth such as the value of a currency, the value of peranakan furniture or the value of a statement. The tendency to see values as separate entities (whether at the level of psychology or at the level of sociology) is not without methodological theoretical validity mainly because societies in general implicitly and explicitly recognise their domain distinctiveness. It is not purely accidental that man has been termed homo oeconomicus, homo politicus, homo kultus etc. Therefore, realistic reasons alone have made it convenient to order the variety and complexity of values on the basis of understandable as well as manageable components. Yet, at the same time, such a conceptualization of values does not go beyond the obvious - a subject we shall return to in a moment.

In development studies several presumptions on values have also been observed. For example, a popular theoretical-methodological approach has been to proceed by examining whether a socio-cultural system under examination has the requisite values necessary to promote development (the question of 'value deficit' as expounded in the writings of Oscar Lewis, 1959, 1963) or whether there are values that negate the processes of development and modernization. This theoretical-methodological outlook has provided a powerful basis, for an exploration of 'conservatism' and 'traditionalism' - two issues of concern that took up much of the intellectual energies of scholars in the past. Yet, implicitly the foregoing conceptualization on development assumed that there are 'positive' (functional) as against 'negative' (non-functional) values in development. The 'positive' values are assumed to exist in developed socio-cultural systems associated with the West whereas those classified as 'negative' are more often than not associated with conservative or tradition-bound societies many of which located in Asia, Africa and South America. To be sure, such a view of development or underdevelopment as the case may be was much influenced by the level of material well-being that each society has been able to attain thus colouring perception of values whether positive or negative.

Theorization on values as they relate to development has also been much influenced by the writings of Max Weber on religion. His (T Parsons, 1930) controversial yet penetrating interpretation of the Protestant Ethic and its transformative potentials on

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values have led to many interesting scholarly works on the subject of values and development (M Weber, 1904; E Fischoff, 1944; S N Eisenstadt, 1968). Stanislav Andreski (1964) for example has proposed two ways of looking at Weber's thesis on development, one based on argument from harmony and the other based on argument from co-variation. In his phraseology the argument from harmony consists in showing that development after the capitalistic mould can occur only if people are endowed with certain traits of character (value orientations) and that a given creed inculcates such traits. However, whether the foregoing thesis is valid depends on whether it applies consistently to comparative groups and creeds (value systems): the argument of co-variation. In The Achieving Society (D C McClelland, 1961) an attempt to operationalize Weber's thesis led to the conclusion that development depends on the need to achieve (a-Ach) which in turn is a function of certain psychological variables or values imbued through socialization viz., self-reliance (independence); postponement of gratification (delay of reward); frugality (positive mysticism, wordly asceticism); adaptability; industry (restlessness); time consciousness; and goal-orientedness. In Hagen's (1962) formulation, the stress is on the development of an innovative-creative personality. However, the psychological traits stressed and the value requirements implied are not at variance with those proposed by McClelland.

In Sorokin's writings (1957) a third perspective on values in terms of their character and functional consequence on development can be observed. Sorokin was concerned with the need for cultural elements or values to be harmonious and non-contradictory in order for development to occur. In this he proposed the concept 'logic-meaningful integration' as an explanatory framework. Briefly, the concept as envisaged by Sorokin takes note of the diversity as well as multiplicity of cultural elements or values in the socio-cultural universe. This socio-cultural diversity he argued could be organized or demarcated into identifiable domains, each exemplified by a unifying theme with a central meaning and satisfying the logical laws of identity, contradiction and consistency. An appropriate citation from Social and Cultural Dynamics explains his position:

"Suppose we find side by side in some cultural conglomeration a highly developed ascetic-monastic life and a materialistic-sensate philosophy. At once we feel that the two are inconsistent; they do not belong

together; they do not make sense; their combination is not integrated in a logico-meaningful unity. This conclusion will remain valid no matter how frequently such a co-existence of these two variables is found. Asceticism and a purely idealistic philosophy of life, on the contrary, do belong to each other logically. If we find together in a given cultural area the strictest caste system and the equalitarian ideology shared by all castes, it once again becomes evident that we are faced with inconsistency (or contradiction). These opposing elements, though they may form a spatial or some other forms of congruencies, cannot be integrated in a logico-meaningful unity" (P Sorokin, p.8).

Sorokin's concept of logical-meaningful integration has over the years directly and indirectly influenced research studies on development, in particular those which try to grapple with the issue of cultures in contact within the rubric of Eastern vs Western value-systems or indeed, within the rubric of value-systems underlying non-Western societies as they compare to each other (see for example, R Dore, 1973; R M Bellah, 1957; C Geertz, 1973; Tham, 1980; F Fukuyama, 1995; J Kotkin, 1993).

However, despite Sorokin's erudition, several troublesome questions remain. First of all, the history of enquiry into values and their functional implications for development seems to suggest that some socio-cultural systems are more successful (because they are more adaptable, possess the necessary value pre-requisites) than others in responding to the demands of development or modernization. The implied logic arising from it is that less successful socio-cultural systems must somehow be more like those which are successful. Such a theoretical inclination gives credence to the concept of 'value deficit' which stresses value adoption' as against 'value adaptation'. The latter involves the incorporation of values into a socio-cultural system in its own terms a fact founded on empirical observation. Moreover, the foregoing theoretical inclination implicitly rejects the fact that in any socio-cultural system, there is available a complete range of values varying from the economic to the political, cultural, religious, aesthetic and moral-ethical - an observation supported by available data on Southeast Asian societies (Tham,

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1980). Therefore, the question of values and development will have to be addressed differently, a subject we shall return to in a moment.

However, Sorokin was insightful to the extent that for values to be effective in development they have to be understood to work in mutual re-inforcement of each other within an identifiable domain of sociological praxis - thus implicitly stressing the cluster effect. In this regard, Mannheim's (1971) use of such terms as 'conjunction', 'integration' and 'intensification' in his discussion of values and culture is instructive for they cohere closely with Sorokin's understanding of values in development. Both Sorokin and Mannheim hinted at the need to regard values as somehow related both logically and empirically but nonetheless failed to take the argument to its logical conclusion. This analysis on values and development will therefore attempt to take up the challenge. But before that, one other observation on values is called for.

Thus for, values have been seen in terms of two essential parameters viz (a) that they are identifiable separate entities (economic values vs political values vs. moral-ethical values etc.) and (b) that they cohere in specificable domains in sociological praxis whether institutionally defined or in the manner argued by Sorokin. However, there is a third parameter in values viz., that of value transmutation or transvaluation where the conventional meaning underlying a value becomes re-interpreted or transformed creating outcomes in sociological praxis that were not originally envisaged or intended. Weber's analysis of the Protestant Ethic, (where economic success is interpreted as a sign of salvation from God) provides valuable insights on this aspect of values. Tham (1980) in his 'Values and Modernization in Southeast Asia' has also argued that moral-ethical values (which popular interpretation tends to regard as inconsonant with economic development because they stress 'giving and sharing' rather that accumulation guided by self-interest) can serve as anchoring points for human effort leading to positive economic outcomes. Thus, moral-ethical values such as 'gratefulness' and 'filial piety' (two values characteristic of Southeast Asian value systems) in themselves do not necessarily produce negative effects for development. How they are integrated in a value-system and its related social structure and more crucially, how they are understood and

interpreted (that is their transmutation) have a greater saliency in determining developmental outcomes.

The foregoing draws attention to two important characteristics relating to values. One is the fact that they are not immutable. Neither do they occupy fixed niches in sociological praxis. Secondly, values undergo transvaluation: the manner of their transvaluation depending on the justificatory functions served in sociological praxis. The latter suggests a means-end dimension in values in that under some circumstances a value can be an end (such as honesty as a desirable value) whereas under other circumstances it could be a means (in which case it performs a rationalizing function).

3. Value System As Grammar

The substantive issue of values and development can now be taken up. In doing so, there will be occasion to relate the discussion to the Southeast Asian context with a view to establishing some valid observations.

There is no doubt that a proper understanding of values as they impact on development cannot ignore the socio-cultural context in which they operate. Values therefore must be seen to lodge in an identifiable entity called culture or society. That being the case the value system of a culture or society has an internal logic of its own thus giving it identity. Be that as it may, because each culture or society is associated with a milieu it follows therefore, that its value-system (in terms of how the values are organized, their relative importance as perceived and the cognitive-perceptual understanding encapsulated) must somehow be consistent with it so that culture, milieu and value-system mirror each other in identifiable ways.

It can be seen in this respect, that a value-system is akin to the grammar of a natural language (composed as it is of basic units termed phonemes which in turn can be organized into higher level distinctive units called morphemes and which finally find realization as sentences in discourse) is not only understood as being constituted of basic units or components but exemplify system and structure. No doubt, in the case of a value system, it is not certain how values or units or components cohere to form larger

meaningful units in sociological praxis. The difficulty as intimated lies in the fact that values cannot like linguistic units (phones/sounds) be recorded, transcribed and reproduced. Values are mental states that have empirical consequences when activated. However, like linguistic acts, values can be symbolically represented such as the colour white for many cultures is symbolic of purity. Be that as it may, it can be shown that values operate in clusters, seldom singularly so that it is quite legitimate to regard values as exemplifying different levels of manifestation according to the level of complexity underlying institutional life or for that matter an organizational structure.

Language or its grammar is a system of symbols (oral and written) for the expression of thoughts and emotions. A value system on the other hand is a meaning system influencing, shaping and determining overt (socio-cultural) and covert (psychological) behaviour guided by choice. Both the grammar of a natural language and the value-system of a culture are learned: the inherent mental makeup of the individual makes possible the two processes of language acquisition and value internalization. Since both systems are learned they can be subjected to change as existential conditions demand it. A question that can be raised at this juncture is whether language as a system and values as a system are co-existent or do they somehow overlap. The answer is probably both. Language is both an instrument/vehicle (thus enabling communication) and a repository (thus enabling the storage of knowledge both valuational and cognitive). It follows that the values of a culture are embedded in its language. However, it is the value system that determines the character of the language and its mode of usage. No doubt, a natural language has its own system of grammatical rules and to that extent can be said to exist independently. Indeed, in language contact situations it may impose conformity to its logic of grammatical rules.

4   La Langue vs Core Values

Saussurian linguistics (1959) differentiates between 'la langue' (the system of rules governing the use and development of a language) and 'la parole' (the idiosyncrasies or habits of usage associated with the speaker of a language).

Langue is relatively stable and is the product of consensus arrived at by the community of speakers based on such concerns as appropriateness, correctness, acceptability and authenticity. It is langue that gives a language its identity and character. In this regard, langue alters as the speakers of a language alter their linguistic habits or preferences. However, the fount of linguistic change is anchored on la parole (the individual speaker or un sujet parlante). It is the individual speaker who exercises the freedom to interpret the rules of grammar embodied in la langue. This last point is critically important in the present discussion because in the case of a value-system, it is also the individual that interprets and articulates its component units.

The 'la langue' of language can be equated with the 'core elements' of a value system. It is that complement or structure of value elements that provide a socio-cultural system its stability and identity. The term 'core elements' should not be understood in the manner some social scientists have conceptualized it when making comparative analysis of value systems (say Malay vs Chinese vs Indian etc). The assumption that cultures share certain universal or core values, while valid to an extent cannot be taken at face value. This is because the foregoing fails to address two factual considerations viz, the mode of structuration underlying the core-elements as a system when compared and the cognitive associations built around the core elements. Value-systems or alternatively systems of core values exemplify differences of the sort identified above. Thus, it can be said that while value systems are directed at achieving existential goals (whether individual or societal; economic or political) they are nonetheless articulated differently.

What is argued thus far is not an attempt to resurrect the concept of cultural relativism. While value systems do share common existential concerns (which this presentation has termed 'core elements') still they should not be construed as identical. There is no doubt a relativism among value-systems if one accepts the premise that every value system is associated with a history and milieu unique to it.

This then leads to another important observation that needs to be formally stated viz. that no culture has a monopoly of values. All cultures inhere in them a comprehensive range of values varying from the economic to the political to the moral-ethical and aesthetic.

That being the case, the question of values as they affect or impact on development (whether political, economic or social) must be examined from two dimensions viz., how the core-elements are structured and prioritized, and how the core-elements are understood and cognitized - the latter a function of the historical and to some extent contemporary collective experience of their adherents. For example how such values as frugality (economic); kindness (moral-ethical); refinement (aesthetic); piety (religious); and loyalty/patriotism (political) are understood and cognitized do frequently vary among cultures precisely because of the aforementioned parameters.

In extension, cultures do exemplify what I shall term value syndromes viz. the tendency for cognitively related values to form a complex entity thus giving the culture or value system a moral-ethical anchor as in the case of <u>budi</u> (Malay); <u>jen</u> (Chinese); <u>conscience</u> (Judeo-Christian) and <u>hutang nalob</u> (Philippine). As an illustration, in valuational terms 'budi' means sense, kindness, character, wisdom, gratefulness, discreteness, breeding, and common sense depending on the social circumstances that warrant its use. The Western conceptualization of 'conscience' or 'sense of guilt' is structured of an array of interrelated value concerns viz., sense of duty, sense of right and wrong, respect for the rights of others, love and consideration for ones fellow men, even loyalty. In the case of 'jen' the pivotal value concerns are humanity and benevolence where each in turn can be, as it were, broken up into its value constituents. From a more general perspective cultures of all hues stress such core elements as 'duty', 'responsibility', 'love', 'loyalty', 'respect', 'honour' etc. Each of these could be the basis of a value syndrome, encapsulating a variety of value concerns. Moreover, cultures at the same time prioritize them differently and therefore even express different degrees of emotional intensity toward them. The value syndrome concept underlines once again the fact that while values reflect common existential concerns they nonetheless are not structured in identical fashion nor are they cognitively identical. It can be argued in this connection that it is the value syndrome(s) of a culture that give it identity and character.

5   Values and Development
It can be seen that a value system like the grammar of a natural language is underlined by its own rules and logic.

In contemporary times in particular, one has to view values (as in the case of language) within the nexus of value systems in contact. If it is accepted that each value system is distinct or exemplifies distinctive characteristics then the question of value systems in contact will have to be addressed to assess its psychological, sociological, and structural outcomes.

Outcomes arising from value systems in contact (whether change, resistance or acceptance) would depend on a variety of operating circumstances among them: (a) the manner of contact whether peaceful or through force (b) the relative status and prestige of the cultures embodying level of scientific-technological sophistication attained (d) the relative benefits perceived in adopting artifacts and mentifacts associated with the other culture/value system and last but not least (e) the desire or even determination of a society to maintain or defend its identity (and by implication its value system as well). The perception that development requires appropriate values has long been accepted without much contention. However, the term 'appropriate values' should be interpreted as (a) existent values conducive to development evolving to become more salient to meet development imperatives and (b) existent values conducive to development being prioritize and therefore accorded greater cognitive awareness in sociological praxis. Both interpretative positions are in keeping with the observation stated earlier viz. that all cultures share a similar range of values.

Keeping in mind the observations made in the previous paragraphs, the interconnection between values and development in Southeast Asia can now be examined. Broadly, three phases are observable viz., (a) the colonial phase (b) the post-colonial phase up to the early 1980s and (c) the current phase exemplified by cumulative globalization.

In the colonial phase, the process of value contact involved largely the value system associated with colonial capitalism and the religious ideology of its progenitors on the one hand and the value system of a hierarchical tradition bound indigenous society on the other. The process of contact can be said to be generally peaceful involving few attempts on the part of the colonial power to displace or overturn the indigenous value

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system (with the possible exception of territories dominated by the Portuguese and Spaniards). In general, the traditional social structure was preserved and in the process maintained the associated value system as well. It can be said that contact between the colonial/Western value system and the value system of indigenous societies was characterized by co-existence.

It was, however, the introduction of modern or secular education under colonial auspices, initially to members of the traditional aristocracy and subsequently to the population at large, that led to a reawakening of hitherto submerged autochthonous cultural impulses among the indigenous population. This development was further strengthened as more began to pursue further studies at the metropolitan centres such as London, Paris, Lisbon, Amsterdam etc. For these persons the universities of the West became the route through which they rediscovered their past values and culture. No doubt, there were two reactions arising from the process of contact: one was the rejection of the native value system and the other, the regaining of confidence even pride for the native past. It can be seen that it was the latter that prevailed in the end - an outcome that was to critically shape nationalism. In extension, two other factors also contributed to maintaining the integrity of the indigenous value system viz., (a) the policy tendency (especially as exemplified by the British and Dutch) of the colonial government to avoid interference on native cultural affairs unless its economic interests were threatened and (b) the deep-rooted influence exercised by religion, that is Islam and Buddhism on the value systems of Southeast Asian societies. These religions (with the exception of Christianity, more specifically Catholicism in the Philippines) were also identified with traditional native polities.

The process of cultural/value contact then, threw into relief three value concerns viz. (a) respect for the individual and his/her rights (b) respect for education as a means for individual and societal amelioration and (c) respect for economic achievement especially in regard to the values of efficiency and productivity. In can be said that these values were not alien to the value-systems of Southeast Asian societies but that as a result of contact with the Western/capitalistic value system became accentuated and revivified thus setting in motion that on-going process of value transformation toward meeting the

demands of development. Quite obviously, the dynamics of this process of value transformation need to be studied carefully. This discussion will not go into the issue.

The post-independence phase can be said to be marked by both the extension and intensification of the three value concerns cited earlier. The process involved essentially the need for conservation and the need for change and innovation. In other words, the demand was for the attaining of a new but dynamic equilibrium in the value system. It involved in other words, preserving the character and stability of the core elements of the value system that provide identity and meaning to social praxis (the langue of a natural language) on the one hand and acknowledging the need for individual freedoms to support development and nation-building on the other.

The current phase underlined by globalization has etched more deeply the concern with values in two senses viz. (a) the need to guide the development process (to be understood holistically) to preserve the integrity of the value system at the national level (this being considered important for nation-building objectives) and (b) the need to optimize the development benefits accruable by plugging into the global system (and therefore implicitly requiring accommodation with the larger more inclusive value system). How these two demands can be managed constitutes the essential challenge to development. There is no doubt that Southeast Asian countries are increasingly more concern and sensitive toward the issue of values as they relate to various development initiatives whether economic, political or educational. At the same time, the fact that a variety of non-European or Asian nation states (with ostensibly 'different' value systems) are able to achieve high growth rates in recent years have provided reassurance that value diversity is not necessarily a hindrance to development. That a value system like language is fundamentally adequate, its adequacy at any point in time of its history and development being relative both in terms of the role it is expected to serve and the milieu associated with it.

It follows, therefore, that a value system has (in the context of development) different strengths and weaknesses. These strengths and weaknesses are only revealed when in contact with other value systems within a shared framework of existential demands. For

example, emergent Western capitalism as an economic ethos in the value system of the West did (and in some cases continue to do so) make demands on the value systems of Southeast Asian societies. However, the manner it has been or continues to be resolved takes cognizance of two facts viz. (a) the value system's adoption of the capitalistic ethos in its own terms and (b) the commensurate internal shifts within the value system to attain a new equilibrium. A value system like the 'langue' of language has an internal logic of its own and to that extent imposes conformity to its rules.

6. Concluding Observations

A sentient issue that may be raised at this juncture is whether values are passive or active agents in development. The answer is that it is both depending on the circumstances. Values are passive agents if they are used to support, validate or rationalize actions and programmes already contemplated. In this regard, it is a tool like language. On the other hand, as in the case of an educational institution, values may be actively and systematically inculcated in the hope that behavioural changes conducive to development (whether political, economic or moral-ethical) may occur. In this regard, value acquisition as a process is not dissimilar to language acquisition as a process. Both involve the imbibing of rules governing acceptable behaviour in one case linguistic and in the other political, cultural or economic as the case may be.

Values like the components of language have no permanent existence of their own. They are not self-sufficient or self-subsistent. Their effect or use depend on human agents who in articulating them are transformed accordingly. No doubt, values can be elevated and may even assume a self-subsistent status especially if they are backed by a theological or moral-ethical system. It is appropriate in this regard to view values as promoting survival, in that they are quintessentially moral-ethical (the mark of being human and therefore infused with spiritual impulses) leading to individual and societal well-being.

Because values inhere a survival dimension it is appropriate to echo Scheler's remark that 'we do not choose values, values choose us'. According to him "higher values (spiritual/moral-ethical,) are characterized by unity and low values (primarily those

aimed at achieving material and instrumental objectives) by fragmentation. Furthermore, groups bound by shared feelings of higher values are more closely united psychically than groups found by shared feelings of lower values. Groups held together by higher values also tend to be more enduring than groups held together by lower values: the latter in specific reference to the unorganized masses whose main concern is to maximize pleasure energized by 'momentary stimuli and mutual contagion'.

It is within the 'higher' and 'low' values dichotonomy that the current East-West debate on values could be viewed. In an essential sense, the parallels are between 'higher' values and communitarianism and 'low' values and individualism. This is not to suggest that the West (which in itself exhibits a variety of value adaptations vis-a-vis each national context) is entirely individualistic and the East solely communitarian.

In the early history of Christianity in Europe (and subsequently in the pursuit of religious freedoms by the Pilgrim Fathers of 16th century American history) communitarian or 'higher' values characterized the social structure. However, with the Reformation in Europe, and following that religious secularization, communitarian values receded. It is this facet of social evolution in the West that Asian societies are concerned about and therefore, have set them on the current course toward social resentiment, in other words giving prominence to communitarian or 'higher' values either through recourse to religion or a shared ideology. No doubt, the latter is also prompted by political values/ends such as political stability and national unity. Whatever it is, the overall value motivation is toward perserving the larger good to achieve a workable balance between social and individual demands in human existence.

Values as exemplified by the East and the West should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Neither do they represent a clash as suggested by Huntington (1993). As argued in this essay, a value system like language is both stable and dynamic. It is infinitely adaptable and resilient. It responds to circumstances. In another sense, values are resources for action (Tham, 1981) or social capital (Fukuyama, 1995) simply because they are meaningful, and therefore serve powerful justificatory functions.

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Language and a value system are both systems of meaning but in a different sense. Language is a meaning system to the extent that it encapsulates the cognitive understandings accumulated by its speakers within a definable historical milieu. On the hand, a value system is a meaning system that serves as a map (in both the psychological and sociological senses) for thought and action, within the framework of a socio-historical community. As such, it is important to view both language and values as being systemic, a condition guided by (a) their inherent potential to evolve to meet changing existential demands and (b) their inherent tendency to maintain identity and integrity. Appendix I provides a summary of parallels or unifying features between language and values.

Earlier, the term 'capitalistic ethos' was used to describe the Western/colonial value system in the context of value systems in contact. Perhaps, it is appropriate in the context of this discussion to conceptualize value systems in terms of less dominant values and dominant values.

Dominant values in a value system, if organized and underlain by a unifying meaning represent an ethos or value syndrome. In this regard, it is quite justifiable to speak of an economic ethos, social ethos, political ethos and religious ethos. It follows that cultural systems (implying value systems as well) can be legitimately categorized as dominated by one or several ethos (as it seems to be the case with the value systems of Southeast Asian societies. As of the moment, it can be argued that Southeast Asian value systems (perhaps with the exception of the immigrant communities) are less dominantly economic but that at the same time economic or capitalistic values are in the ascendance perhaps becoming dominant values eventually and assuming the form of an economic ethos, that is an ethos that is in harmony with the value system as a whole. If the parallels between language and a value system are accepted then it is more correct to talk about values competing for ascendance (a process determined by existential demands) rather than values in conflict within a socio-cultural system. This means that every value or ethos has the potential to ascend to prominence in sociological praxis, depending on the operating circumstances at any point in time in the on-going evolution or development of a society. In this regard, values by themselves are neutral. This discussion has argued that no socio-cultural system has a monopoly over values. In one

system economic values may be dominant or in ascendance as against another where the dominant values are non-economic. However, changing existential circumstances quite often allow less dominant or ascendant values to surface and to assume dominance. In this regard, societies or cultures must be seen as inherently capable of responding to changing existential demands and in doing so project those values that are necessary and relevant. It is, therefore, necessary to regard every value system as potentially adequate to meet the demands of development whether economic, political, moral-ethical or aesthetic.

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PARALLELS/UNIFYING FEATURES
BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND VALUES

LANGUAGE

VALUES

(BOTH CHARACTERISED
BY SYSTEM & STRUCTURE)

A.

Basic unit is represented by:

Basic unit is a :

(a)   sounds/phones at the
phonological level

    (a)   value (economic, political,
moral-ethical, aesthetic
etc.)

(b)   words/morphones at the
morphological level

    (b)   value domain :
economic, political,
moral-ethical, aesthetic etc

(c)   sentences, full or partial
at the syntactical level
within a definable area
or topic of discourse

    (b)   value syndrome/ethos :
social, economic, political,
cultural, etc

(FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS)

B.

Governed by Linguistic Rules
regarding correctness,
appropriateness and acceptability

Governed by Socio-cultural
Rules/Precepts regarding
rightness, appropriateness,
correctness and acceptability

Anchored to an identifiable socio-
cultural and ecological milieu

Anchored to an identifiable socio-
cultural and ecological milieu

Stable and Dynamic

Stable and Dynamic

(MODES OF ACQUISITION)

C.

Learned System of Symbols
(Theoretically Arbitrary but

Learned System of Value
Precepts/Beliefs/ Ideals

Empirically non-Arbitrary)

(Theoretically Arbitrary but
Empirically non-Arbitrary)

LANGUAGE

Learned System of Linguistic
Rules (Rules of Grammar
Rules of usage)

VALUES

Learned System of Socio-
cultural rules/norms of behaviour

(LEVELS OF OPERATION)

D.
Social (la langue)
(stresses rule/system integrity;
determines correctness in
linguistic usage; stable and
coherent)

Social (Communitarianism)
(stresses rule/system integrity;
society-wide application;
relatively stable; coherent)

Individual (la parole)
(stresses idiosyncratic tendencies;
the creative/rule-breaking
dimension of speech)

Individual (Individualism)
(stresses idiosyncratic tendencies;
in value articulation with either
'positive' or 'negative'
consequences for the social.

(REPRESENTATION)

E.
Language as a Repository of Meanings
(Cognitive & Valuational)

Values as exemplification of a
world-view/holistic
meaning system

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