



What matters in life?

An existential perspective on values

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Agenda

1. Role of values in our life
2. Values and our time
3. Existentially relevant values
4. Feelings
5. Deepest value
6. Bridge to meaning



1. Role of values in our life

- **Abstract term**
- What makes life **valuable**
- **Give orientation**



2. Values and our time

Horizon:

Value pluralism, value shift, value decline...



2.1 Value context

Norms – Values – Custom – Rite – Tabu –
Sanctions



2.2 Social/societal values

In our social system are considered as values:

Classical values: freedom of opinion,
maintenance of health, care for the sick,
education of the youth, political and gender
equality, economic growth ...



2. Values and our time

Upcoming values: **freedom of Abortion, Homosexualität, homosexual marriage, immigration und abolition of death penalty**

Example for values in a Political program:
Competence to compete, prosperity and social cohesiveness



2.3 Investigation on changes of public values

Ronald Inglehart: “... material well-being and physical security toward (...→) quality of life.”
(1977)

Helmut Klages since 1980ies: change from „duty- and acceptance-values to values around self-actualisation”.

Ulrich Beck finds a positive understanding of Individualisation
(1986)



... But also the Ego-society

- **Society of claims**
- **Society of elbows**
- **Society of pleasure**

→ lead to Hedonism with ruthless, inconsiderateness, individualisation, loss of solidarity & corruption.



... But also the Ego-society

Conservatives see this „change of values“ as a consequence of the

decline of values

due to a loss of the **moral basis** in society (like diminuation of the bond of humans to religion and church, loss of virtues...)

→ „needs a turn to more authority and **traditional values**“



... Seems assured:

- Values like **obedience and subordination** ↓
- **autonomy and free will** ↑

Mainly due to **education and quality of work** (Klages 1988, 2001)



2.4 Hypotheses for causes of change

- **Sozialisation-hypotheses** as basis (Inglehart)
- **postmaterialistic needs – values of self-actualisation** (Klages)
- **Prosperity, education; but also mobility, communication society...** (Inglehart)



2.5 Result for counselling/therapy?

How to deal as psychotherapists

with the social and normative change and the new values?

→ Tendency goes clearly into the direction of *self-actualisation, individualisation and life-quality*

→ **connection with the subjective experience of values**



The first question is: How can values regain their value? I.e.

... again become a value?

... a new value?

... how do we find a value?



3. Existentially relevant values

2 general forms of values:

- value-categories, abstract (e.g. justice, freedom, responsibility, friendship, democracy...)
- personal (existential) values (my child, partner, life...)



3.1 Definition of value

value = reason of the **preference** of something to another thing (or action, situation...)



3. Existentially relevant values

What is the reason?

From where the information?

Thinking?

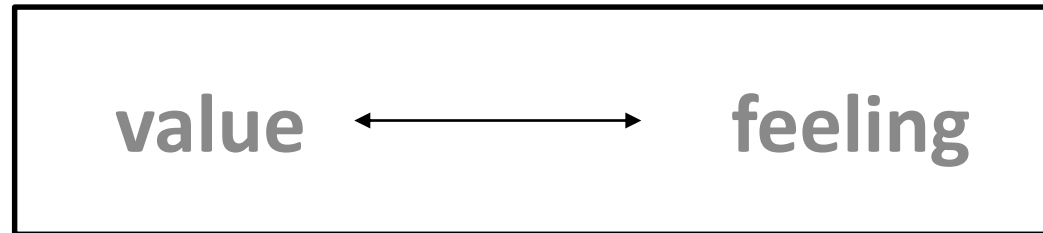
Facts?

Fashionable?

Authorities (teachers, books, state, church...)?



3.2 Existential value



value = objektive correlate to the subjectively experienced **FEELING**



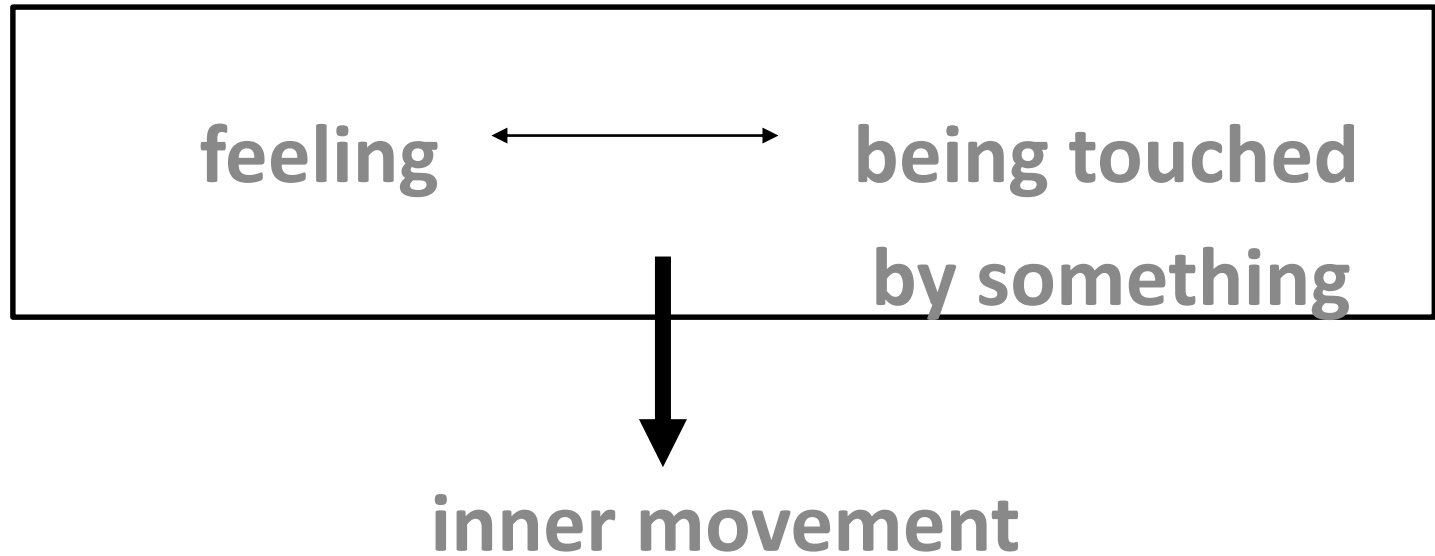
3. Existentially relevant values

No experiencing of values without being in a
relationship!

Experiencing values means to relate something
to my own life



4. Feelings





4. Feelings

movement



Life

→ In **FEELINGS** swings life



4. Feelings

movement
↕
Life

FEELING → perception of a thing/situation etc.
in its **relevance for one's own life**



How does it go to feel?

TURNING TOWARDS the object

1. enter into a **relationship**
2. **let it act** upon me
3. how **do I feel** in the presence of this?
4. this impression → **movement** within me = **FEELING**



5. The deepest value

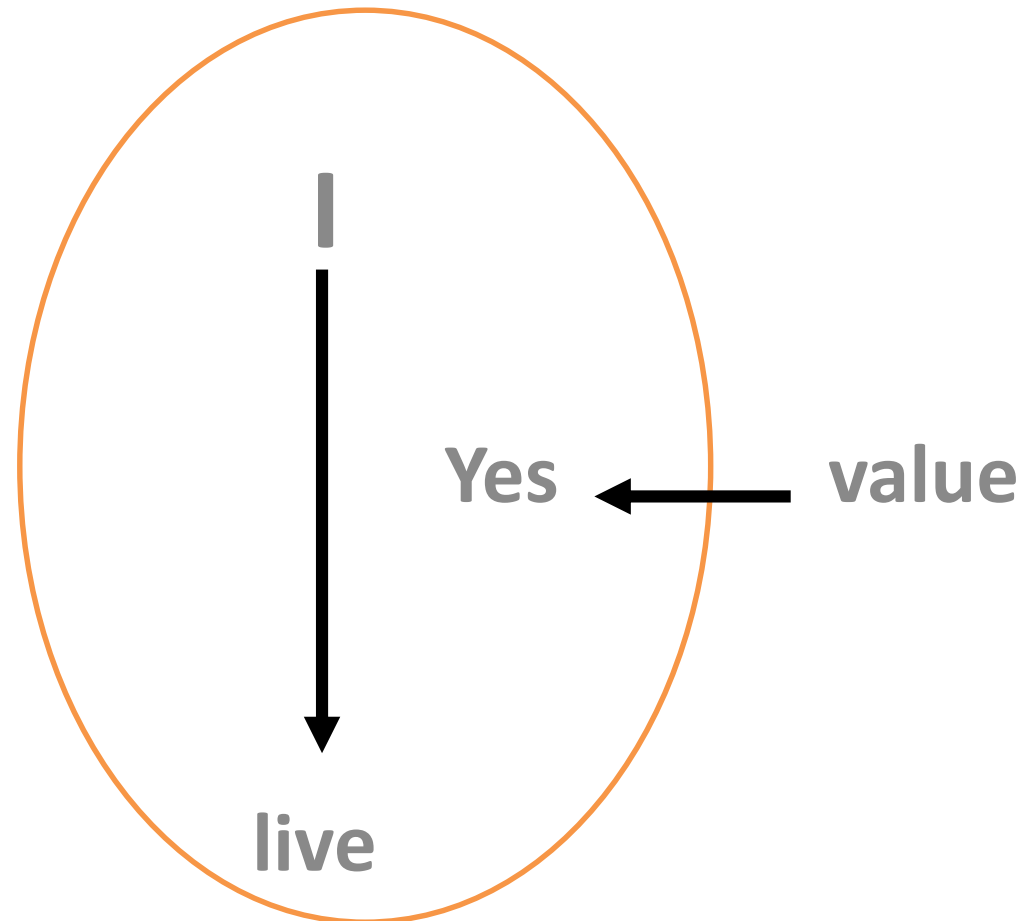
Fundamental value:

„I am –

and it is ultimately good, that I live.“



5. Deepest value



Fundamental value



Summary: values

value = what is „good“

Good ... Fostering life
... Improves my attitude to life:
„with that I like more to live “



6. Meaning

meaning = direction to a value



value



Thank you for your attention!



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