

Value-Based Prioritization⁷

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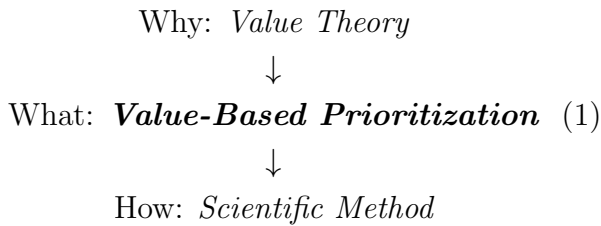
Abstract

A method is proposed to use value theory to quantitatively prioritize potential actions to accomplish a goal. This method is applied to the example of choosing meaningful work using an example value system based in the desire to reduce suffering.

1 Introduction

Why should a particular goal be pursued (“Why”)? Given a goal, what actions should be pursued to best accomplish said goal (“What”)? Given an action, how should said action be pursued (“How”)?

This article proposes that value theory usually best scopes “Why” and “What” and the scientific method usually best answers “How”. A method called Value-Based Prioritization (1) is developed to answer the “What” question:



2 Why a Goal?

“Why a Goal?” is usually best scoped using a value system because value systems are evaluative by nature¹². Example value systems include intuitionism⁹, consequentialism¹³, evolutionary biology⁵, religion⁸, epicureanism¹⁰, stoicism³, political liberalism¹⁴, communitarianism⁴, objectivism², etc. Evaluating differ-

ent value systems is left as an (lifelong) exercise for the reader.

3 What Actions?

“What Actions?” is usually best scoped by prioritizing actions because actions usually have differing effect sizes. It follows from the value system used to answer “Why” that the same value system is used to evaluate the priority of each action. This article proposes a method called Value-Based Prioritization which builds a quantitative prioritization model based on predicted effect sizes. Raw prioritization scores are further refined by contextual factors such as implementation time, cost, risk, and other judgments.

4 How to do an Action?

Given answers to “Why?” and “What?”, how to implement actions is usually best answered with the scientific method¹: observations are made and rational thought is used to generate hypotheses, hypotheses are tested with experiments, and successful experiments lead to theories and results.

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