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**On Being Struck By Value -
Exclamations, Motivations And Vocations**

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ON BEING STRUCK BY VALUE – EXCLAMATIONS, MOTIVATIONS AND VOCATIONS

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§1 Introduction

Suppose that realism about values is true, that there are objects and states of affairs which are intrinsically valuable, that some objects and states of affairs are intrinsically more valuable than others and that some objects and states of affairs are intrinsically valuable for Sam, and others for Maria.

Suppose, further, that there is intuitive, direct, knowledge of value and of the exemplification of value and that such knowledge is an affective state or act or, at least, has an affective dimension.

If these assumptions are true, then they allow us to give plausible accounts of what it is for a reason to be external and yet motivate (§2), of the distinction between what I ought to do and what I must do (practical necessity) (§3) and of the phenomenon of value-blindness (§4). In what follows I provide these accounts and argue that they are plausible. The two assumptions I make are large and controversial. I

therefore consider some candidates for the role of affective, intuitive knowledge of value and isolate what seems to me to be the best candidate (§5).

§2 Motivations and Reasons

The requirements that have to be satisfied by a good account of reasons and motives are numerous and difficult to satisfy¹.

(1) An account of reasons and motives should not privilege only some of the things for which there are reasons. At the very least we need to take into account reasons for acting, for feeling, for desiring, wanting and striving, for being certain, conjecturing, judging and for believing. In other words, even the venerable distinction between theoretical and practical reason(s) does not cover all the cases. A reason to act is a practical reason, a reason to believe is a theoretical reason. But a reason to despise someone is neither a practical nor a theoretical reason.

(2) An account of reasons and motivates should take into account the (apparent) variety of reasons, motives, grounds or motivators. This variety is both psychological and non-psychological. Perceptions, emotions, desires, judgements and beliefs, indeed all intentional states and acts, are candidates for what may motivate. But facts, too, understood as obtaining states of affairs, are very good candidates for being good reasons: deontic facts, axiological facts and the different kinds of natural facts. And the same may be true of non-facts, for example deontic, axiological and natural states of affairs may be grounds for our acts and attitudes. Thus some account has to be given of the relation between subjective and objective reasons. Suppose that subjective reasons are reasons typically reported as follows:

Maria slapped Sam because she took him to be a sexist
Maria avoids Sam because she fears his violent tongue

¹ Many of them have recently been described and evaluated in a refreshingly lucid way by Jonathan Dancy (2000); cf also Stein 1970 34ff..

Maria hates Sam because she despises his behaviour

and that objective reasons are typically reported as follows:

Maria slapped Sam because he is a sexist

Maria avoids Sam because he has a violent tongue

Maria hates Sam because his behaviour is despicable.

Here, in each case, we have a “because” of reasons. (Distinguishing “because’s” in this way may take the form of distinguishing different senses of “because”; but it need not do so). Our ascriptions of subjective reasons refer to psychological states of Maria. In such reports a reason is ascribed by a clause dominated by a psychological verb which ascribes an intentional state or act. Our ascriptions of objective reasons refer to no psychological states of Maria.

(3) Are subjective reasons or motives always propositional? Or are there also non-propositional reasons. Simple seeing, the non-conceptual seeing of a rabbit as a dog, but also emotions triggered by simple seeings such as admiration are good candidates for the role of subjective reasons which lack any propositional or conceptual content.

(4) According to a tradition often referred to as “Humeanism” what motivates must have some conative or affective features, for example an element of desire or emotion. But, it is often objected, one unfortunate aspect of this requirement is that the relevant conative or affective features seem to function only as what *pushes* us to act or feel or desire. The view that reasons and motivates push us to act or to be certain ways is one aspect of what Husserl and Dancy call “psychologism” in the theory of practical reason.

(5) A satisfying account of reasons and motives must tell us what the relation is between the relation of causality and the relations or ties of justifying or grounding or being a good reason for F-ing or for being G. Can the relation of causality and the relation of justifying relate the very same terms? Finally, (6) as is already perhaps apparent, a theory of the causal because and of the because of

justification must be part of a general count of “because” and of “because of”, of “why” and of explanation, personal and impersonal.

Suppose Sam is struck by the brutality of Maria’s treatment of Hans. He therefore has a reason to dislike Maria and a reason to desire to see less of her. He also has a reason to avoid her company, a reason to act in a particular way. Indeed he has a very good reason to avoid her company. How does this episode, Sam’s being struck by the brutality of Maria’s treatment of Hans, fare with respect to the requirements mentioned ?

If the locution “struck by” is any guide, Sam’s mental state or act is not propositional, as are judging, believing and regret. The object of Sam’s act or state is a feature of Maria’s behaviour. Her brutality is either a complex and wholly natural feature or a “thick” value inseparably connected with a complex non-axiological feature of her behaviour. I shall assume that the latter option is the right one. (Those inclined to embrace the former option should modify my example and consider a more obviously thick axiological feature, such as injustice, or a thin axiological feature, such as badness). Since Sam is struck by the brutality of Maria’s treatment of Hans, her treatment of Hans *is* brutal or, at least, brutality is really exemplified. “Being struck by” is factive (veridical). Being struck by is a type of episodic acquaintance or knowledge although it is not any type of knowledge that. Because of the factivity of “being struck by” the state of affairs that Maria treats Hans brutally obtains, the fact exists. It does not follow that for Sam to be struck by the brutality of Maria is for him to be struck by the fact that she is brutal. (If someone simply sees the redness of a dress, the dress is red, the fact that it is red exists, but he does not thereby see the fact or see that the dress is red).

Being struck by the brutality of Maria’s treatment of Hans, then, is a piece of knowledge. But the knowledge involved is not intellectual. It is affective. Is this welcome news for Humeanism ? No. The affective and conative states and acts which, according to Humeanism, are constitutive of motivation, differ in two key respects from being struck by value. First, the desires and emotions to which the Humean likes to appeal have valence, they are positive or

negative. Respect and scorn, pleasure and displeasure, liking and disliking, love and hate, positive and negative desire (aversion, shunning) can motivate *because* they are positive or negative. Secondly, they motivate by *pushing* us to act or to adopt certain attitudes. Indeed it seems that for the Humean what makes a state capable of pushing is its valence. But being struck by value has no valence. It is therefore on most accounts of emotions not an emotion. Indeed it explains and justifies Sam's emotions towards Maria, his dislike of her, and also his desire to see less of her and his flight. Had Sam been a different type of person his grasp of Maria's brutality might have led to him to admire her, to seek her company. In neither case does his grasp of her brutality push him. If anything, it pulls him. In the latter scenario, it pulls him towards Maria. In the former, it pulls him away. The emotions and desires triggered by his grasp of her brutality may be said to push him in different directions, if the Humean is right, but not his being struck by her brutality. His grasp of her brutality is not any sort of reaction since it is a piece of affective knowledge.

Does the fact that Sam is struck by Maria's brutality belong to what Williams calls an agent's "subjective motivational set", *S* (Williams 1981b 102)? Sam's being struck by Maria's brutality is certainly a psychological feature of Sam, it is subjective. But Williams account of *S* suggests that this feature of Sam does not belong to *S*:

I have discussed *S* primarily in terms of desires, and this term can be used, formally, for all elements in *S*. But this terminology may make one forget that *S* can contain such things as dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and various projects, as they may abstractly be called, embodying commitments of the agent (Williams 1981b 105).

Sam's being struck by Maria's brutality cannot be called, however formally, a desire. It is itself a reason for Sam to desire to see less of Maria. A desire may, of course, be a reason for another desire. But Sam's being struck by Maria's brutality has no propositional content and so is no desire.

The elements of S have one negative feature in common: desires, dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, projects and commitments are not items of knowledge. They typically involve knowledge but they are not items of knowledge. Evaluations may be wrong, desires and emotions may be incorrect or inappropriate, loyalties and projects may be misguided. Knowledge is never wrong, incorrect or misguided. But if Sam is struck by Maria's brutality then she is brutal and he is affectively acquainted with her brutality.

Although Sam's being struck by Maria's brutality does not belong to what Williams calls S it is certainly something that can motivate Sam even if, as Humeans and Williams claim, no intellectual or perceptual state can motivate. Sam's being struck by Maria's brutality, we are assuming, is an affective phenomenon or at least a phenomenon which has an affective dimension. But it is a relation to the way things are. If it is subjective, it is also relational.

Is Sam's being struck by Maria's brutality a subjective or an objective reason? To say that

Sam avoids Maria because he was struck by her brutality

is an ascription of a subjective reason, whereas

Sam avoids Maria because of her brutality

is an ascription of an objective reason. But perhaps we can say that Sam avoids Maria *because of her felt brutality*. This formulation is not an ascription of a subjective or of an objective reason, as these have been described above. From the fact that Sam avoids Maria because of her felt brutality, because of the brutality he is struck by and acquainted with, it does not follow that he avoids her because he is struck by her brutality, only that she is brutal.

The claim that there is an affective grasp of value which has no valence and is nevertheless the way we relate to the axiological

properties which constitute (one of) the most basic kinds of objective reasons is no longer a very popular claim. Indeed it will strike many as unintelligible. But being struck by value is not the only affective state which is neither positive nor negative but which nevertheless motivates and this should give the sceptic pause.

Consider surprise and wonder. These are certainly affective episodes or states. Surprise is a “neutral” emotion or at any rate affectively neutral, neither positive nor negative. There are pleasant and unpleasant surprises. Wonder has no polar opposite. It might be argued (indeed I would argue) that wonder, unlike surprise, is itself positive. But if Descartes (*Discourse on Method*) is right, wonder is a type of surprise. Surprise and wonder motivate one important class of desires and activities. They lead to one type of desire to know, the disinterested desire to know, as opposed, say, to the desire to know which is motivated merely by a desire to buy a cheap chalet. They also motivate inquiry. So neither valence nor polarity are required for an affective state or act to be motivational.

Even if something like the above account of being struck by value is plausible, it may well be thought that it does not generalise to some of the most important types of case with which a theory of non-theoretical reasons has to deal. For I considered only the case in which someone is struck by the value of an actual object, the brutality of Maria’s treatment of Hans. Consider those reasons to act which have to do with the deontic and axiological properties of future states of affairs. Can one be struck by the value or disvalue of an envisaged state of affairs ? Or should we adopt the view that it is possible to fore-feel (*vorfühlen*) the (dis)value of future states of affairs ? If the answers to these questions are negative, then the phenomenon of being struck by value will not unlock all the doors in the theory of non-theoretical reasons.

§3 Ought vs Must

Zumeist aber kam solchen Menschen des Verhängnisses jene erlösende Stunde, jene Herbst-Stunde der Reife, wo sie *mußten*, was sie nicht einmal *,wollten`*- und die Tat, vor der sie sich vorher am meisten gefürchtet

hatten, fiel ihnen leicht und ungewollt vom Baum, als eine That ohne Willkür, fast als Geschenk (Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, 1885, June-July, 38(13); my emphasis).

Deontic modal expressions such as “ought” and “may” behave in many ways like modal expressions such as “necessary” “possible” and “must” when used in theoretical contexts. But “must” and “necessity” can also be used in non-theoretical ways. Many philosophers argue that when “must” and “necessary” are used to express practical necessities they are to be distinguished from oughts (deontic necessity). One philosopher who has insisted on this distinction is Bernard Williams². In an early article he refers to D. H. Lawrence’s essay, “Benjamin Franklin”, in his *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Williams 1972 93). We find there the very Lawrentian injunction:

Resolve to abide by your own deepest promptings.....Kill when you must, and be killed the same: the *must* coming from the gods inside you, or from the men in whom you recognize the Holy Ghost

Not every practical *ought*, Williams later argues, is a practical *must*. He gives what he calls a boring and a less boring argument for this claim. The boring argument is

that *must* is selected when the preferred course of action is very markedly favoured over others, or the weight of reasons overwhelmingly comes down on one side. There are cases in which something like the boring argument is correct. Those are the cases in which a set of objectives or constraints is merely taken for granted, and relative to them, a particular course of action is very clearly singled out. But in general the boring answer is wrong (Williams 1981 126).

² Cf. Cavell 1982 308-310 ; Cavell 1976 27ff.; White 1975 158; Gaita 1991 100.

It is this sense of *must* which is illustrated by Edmund's reply in *Mansfield Park* (ch. 4): "Fanny must have a horse". The characterisation of the practical *must* in terms of weight of reasons is perhaps not the only boring characterisation available. An alternative might appeal to the degrees of urgency of reasons. Another would be to distinguish between higher and lower duties or *oughts*. But all three ways of isolating the practical *must* rely on comparative notions. This is not true of Williams' preferred way of characterising the practical must. In serious cases of practical necessity the set of objectives or constraints which determines the outcome is not accepted or taken for granted by the agent "as something which, so far as this deliberation is concerned, he does not intend to change" (Williams 1981 126). One key feature of practical necessity, as Williams understands it, is that the distinction between the practical "cannot" and the theoretical or physical "cannot" is difficult to draw. A second feature is that "conclusions of practical necessity seriously arrived at" constitute "to a greater or lesser degree, *discoveries about oneself*" (Williams 1981 130; my emphasis). Thus Williams says of practical necessities or *musts* like those of Ajax:

These necessities are internal, grounded in the ethos, the projects, the individual nature of the agent, and in the way he conceives the relation of his life to other people (Williams 1993 103, cf. 75ff.)

Some of Williams' formulations, like the quotation from D. H. Lawrence above, suggest one plausible candidate for the role of what one discovers about oneself in conclusions of practical necessity. We sometimes discover what is non-extrinsically valuable for us, our personal values, what used to be called our vocation (*Bestimmung*). A vocation has all the properties which, Williams thinks, are possessed by what recognition of practical necessity implies: "an understanding at once of one's powers and incapacities, and of what the world permits, and the recognition of a limit which is neither simply external to the self, nor yet a product of the will" (Williams 1981 130-131). To the extent that a vocation (perhaps one may have more than one of them) is something one has and something that can be discovered it is not the product of any self-determination (*Selbstbestimmung*). But

realist accounts of what one is and may become are much less influential than anti-realist accounts to the effect that we are, at bottom, what we make of ourselves.

One realist account of vocations which clearly distinguishes between a moral ought and a vocational must is given by José Ortega y Gasset. In his 1932 study of Goethe's vocation (*Bestimmung*) Ortega criticises the tradition which fails to distinguish between the moral *ought* and a vocational *must*:

It is terrible but undeniable: the man who *had to be* a thief and, thanks to a virtuous effort of will, has managed not to be a thief, falsifies his life. One should not, then, confuse the ought to be (*deber ser*) of morals, which lives in man's intellectual region, with the having to be (*tener que ser*) of a personal vocation, which is located in the deepest and primary region of our being³.

Talk about knowledge of one's vocation(s) is doubly ambiguous. First, such knowledge may be negative or positive. The clearest and least controversial cases of discovery in this area are discoveries that a certain way of life is *not for me*, that a certain person or occupation or habit is *not for me*. Perhaps *all* such discoveries are negative⁴. Secondly, when we talk about what is intrinsically valuable for Sam or Maria it is easy to overlook the difference between the individual or personal values themselves and their terms. Suppose that certain very specific ways of being generous are intrinsically valuable for Sam. Such individual or personal values are perhaps exemplified by Maria but they could be exemplified by someone else. If it makes any sense at all to talk of a person's vocation, then what is constitutive of such a vocation are the personal values themselves and only secondarily their contingent exemplifications and non-exemplifications.

Williams points out that although any "notion of necessity must carry with it a corresponding notion of impossibility" it can "make a difference which of them presents itself first and more naturally" (Williams 1981 127). I may conclude that I have to do one thing and

³ Ortega 1947 406; on the history of the distinction in Ortega, see Marias 1983 452-455.

⁴ On this idea in Scheler and Musil, cf. Mulligan 2007a forthcoming.

that certain apparent alternatives are merely apparent. “Alternatively, it may be the impossibility that bears the priority. *Y* and *Z*, the only alternatives to *X*, are things I cannot conceivably do, and are excluded; then consequently, *X* is what I must, or have to, do” (Williams 1981 127).

But there is a third possibility which is suggested by the distinctions already introduced. Suppose Sam’s career as a doctor is marked by a series of discoveries such as that being a certain sort of specialist is not for him, that being a general practitioner in the country is not for him, that being a general practitioner for a certain type of patient is not for him, that being a general practitioner in a culture which is hostile to the very idea of a profession is not for him - and so on. In such cases Sam sees and rejects as practically impossible certain possibilities. But his grasp of what he must do is peculiarly empty. It is just his awareness that what he must do is more or less closely related to the rejected possibilities. In the best case, he gets closer and closer to doing what his vocation requires.

If discovery of what is not valuable for me is a plausible candidate for the role of what one discovers in conclusions of practical necessity, then two questions at least must be answered. First, how does one make such discoveries? Second, what is the relation between such awareness and conclusions to the effect that one must not *F*?

I suggest that Sam’s awareness that a certain way of life is not for him is at its most direct when he is struck by this fact, when he is struck by the disvalue for him of a certain way of life, and so when he comes to prefer what is less disvaluable for him to what is more disvaluable for him. As Stendhal puts it, in *De l’Amour*: “On est ce qu'on peut, mais on sent ce qu'on est”.

Is being struck in such ways an awareness of a practical *must*? Consider the parallel question: How does one move from sensitivity to value to awareness of deontic facts? The distinction between ought and must should be reflected in a difference between the transition

from grasp of value to *ought* and the transition from grasp of value to *must*.

The central feature of the transition from awareness of value to grasp of what I *ought* to do is that it involves spanning a large gap. Suppose it is true that what is (non-aesthetically) valuable is what ought to be the case, and that value grounds oughtness, if anything does. Thus it ought to be the case that people behave generously *because* generosity is valuable. There is still a large gap between what ought to be the case and what Sam or Maria ought to do in particular situations. On some views, this is in part because what they ought to do depends on what they can do. Whether or not this is the case there is a gap between what ought to be the case and what Sam or Maria ought to do because what they ought to do is typically a function of many other values than that of generosity and of many things which are not values.

The gap between what is intrinsically (dis)valuable for Sam and what Sam *must* (not) do is not quite so large. If Sam is struck by the disvalue for him of a certain way of life, he knows what he must not do. The distinction between what one ought to do or be and what ought to be the case has no counterpart in the sphere of practical necessity. What one must (not) do is a *de re* fact, a *de se* fact which has no *de dicto* counterpart.

It is of course possible that Sam's personal values are not consistent. Sam then has a problem which is much greater than the problems posed by conflicts between different *oughts* or duties. It is also possible that Sam knows what he must (not) do but is incapable, for whatever reason, of living up to his personal values. This suggests that Socratism, the view that someone's knowledge of value makes him realise this value (cf. Williams 1981 128-9), is false.

Although discoveries about vocations and personal values are good candidates for what conclusions of practical necessity, as described by Williams, reveal, they are not candidates explicitly put forward by Williams. Indeed one of his views may well be thought to

rule out such candidates – his account of the relation between character and practical necessity⁵.

Williams says that practical incapacities and impossibilities are incapacities of character and that “to be an expression of character is perhaps the most substantial way in which an action can be one’s own” (Williams 1981b 129-30). If by a person’s having a character we are here to understand what Williams elsewhere famously referred to as having projects and categorical desires with which that person is identified (Williams 1981a 14), then there is good reason to think that a person’s personal values and his sensitivity to these are more fundamental than his character and so distinct from these⁶.

Desires, projects and the will are not as fundamental to a person as his sensitivity to values, personal and impersonal. For if desires and projects motivate our actions it is our (apparent) grasp of value which motivates our desires and projects. If we say that a *character* is constituted by certain desires and projects, then we should say that a *person* is constituted by his sensitivity to value, impersonal and personal, by the values he is and can be struck by, and by what is intrinsically valuable for that person. Then the most substantial way in which an action can be one’s own is to be an expression of what one is and of one’s awareness of this. One argument in favour of such a view is that it allows a place for what seem to be incompatibilities between a person’s personal values and his character⁷.

§4 Value-Blindness

Philosophers have often succumbed to the temptation to talk of forms of blindness other than colour blindness. One such form is

⁵ There is another view espoused by Williams which is incompatible with the present account of vocations, his view that a sense of shame is or may be central to practical necessities together with his shame socialism. The ties between shame, individual values and practical necessity are, I believe, incompatible with the view that shame has to involve the real or imagined view of others.

⁶ Ortega rejects the idea that a personality is wholly constituted by its desires at Ortega 1946 79.

⁷ Gay’s discussion of Williams on practical necessity rejects the claim that the experience of practical necessity is a type of emotional experience but argues that it has a distinct sensational property (Gay 1989).

Gestalt blindness, as when one fails to see the way in which the parts of an object hang together, or fails to see the duck in the drawing. The inabilities peculiar to colour blindness and *Gestalt* blindness are genuinely visual. This cannot be said of the other forms of blindness philosophers have referred to: for example, blindness to possibilities, mind-blindness (*Seelenblindheit*), meaning blindness, blindness to structure and to expression and blindness to values (*Wertblindheit*).

One may fail to grasp the funniness of a particular remark or indeed of any remark. A culture may be extremely sensitive to visual aesthetic values and insensitive to verbal aesthetic values, another culture may be extremely sensitive to verbal aesthetic values and insensitive to visual aesthetic values, yet another may be insensitive to both types of value. One group of people may be much more sensitive to grace, charm and ugliness than another. A political culture may be very sensitive to one political value, for example, fraternity, equality or social justice, and much less sensitive to another, say, freedom. Philosophies of value sometimes accuse other philosophies of being blind to certain types of value: classical utilitarianism, it has been plausibly argued, was blind to vital values (Guyau, Scheler). And Pascal tells us that certain types of greatness are invisible to the rich (Pascal, *Pensées*, XIV)

Although something like value-blindness seems to exist its exact characterisation is a controversial matter. My use here of terms such as “sensitivity” is intended to mark a distinction between grasp of value and reactions to value. It is one thing to be aware of gracelessness or charm and another to react to the presence or absence of these (dis)values. This distinction provides us with two rival ways of understanding one important aspect of value-blindness.

An (I hope) uncontroversial observation about value-blindness is that sensitivity to one type of value often crowds out awareness of other values or makes one insensitive to other values. Hartmann speaks in this connexion of the tyranny of values (“Tyrannei der Werte”) and mentions as examples the fanaticism of justice and the fanaticism of love of one’s neighbours (Hartmann 1962 (1926) 576-9) .

What mechanism might explain the tyranny of values ? One possibility is that certain values enjoy more prominence than others simply in virtue of the fact that they are the privileged objects of affective reactions and desires. Then we might explain the fact that, in a certain population, the aesthetic dimensions of food and drink have become invisible and their health-values very prominent, by saying that the desires and affective reactions bound up with the vital values of food and drink have made the aesthetic dimensions invisible. Our desires and affective reactions do indeed crowd out other desires and affective reactions. But the proposed mechanism has one weakness. Desires and affective reactions are based on (apparent) knowledge of what is valuable. Such knowledge is either intellectual knowledge-that or some form of sensitivity to values. If we accept the Humean claim that perception, belief and propositional knowledge cannot motivate, then we are led to the conclusion that what ultimately explains the tyranny of values must be a feature of our (in)sensitivity to values.

Suppose that sensitivity to value is some form of intuitive acquaintance which is wholly non-affective and more or less perceptual or intellectual. Then presumably a creature endowed with such a faculty could become acquainted with all sorts of values, just as a creature capable of visual perception can in principle become acquainted with a huge number of colours, shapes and coloured shapes. If our acquaintance with value were intuitive but non-affective, our acquaintance with one type of value would not make us insensitive to other values. If, on the other hand, our acquaintance with value has an affective dimension, then it is open to us to explain the tyranny of values by appealing to the limitations of affective acquaintance.

§5 What is it to be Struck by Value ?

Perhaps the foregoing suffices to show that the very idea of being struck by values is not incoherent and possesses certain attractions. What it does not provide is answers to the following two questions: What is it to be struck by value ? Does the phenomenon exist ?

I have supposed that being struck by value is an affective and epistemic contact with value. It is therefore a type of intuition. But value intuitionism comes in many forms. There is the view that intuitive knowledge of values has a conative rather than an affective dimension. It has also been claimed that there is intuitive knowledge of values which is not any sort of affective or conative phenomenon but is more or less perceptual or intellectual. Finally, the view that there is affective intuition of value comes in at least three flavours. There is the view that such intuition is provided by certain emotions or by certain affects. There is the view that it is a *sui generis* type of function or state called “Wertfühlen” by some phenomenologists, the feeling of values and disvalues. Then there is the view that affective knowledge of values is the phenomenon of being affected or moved by values. Which of these different conceptions of intuitive knowledge of values is the least implausible ?⁸

Intuitionism about values is open to two distinct types of criticism. First, it is an epistemology tailor-made for a particular metaphysics. Axiological nihilism and many forms of naturalism about values entail that intuitionism about values is at best an inescapable illusion. Secondly, and independently, intuitionism looks very like a very good example of a particular type of philosophical vice described by Wittgenstein. There are certain forms of words which force themselves on us, mere similes (*Gleichnisse*) which have no real content. One possible example is the tendency to use the language of vision when describing shame, another the tendency to use the language of hearing when describing guilt. Similarly, it is a striking fact that philosophers and the man in the street frequently employ the language of perception and of its objects, in particular of visual perception and its objects, to talk about values, vices, virtues and our intentional relations to these. The good shines - like the sun. If we have eyes to see, the just man will show us what justice is. The good, the virtues and the virtuous shine and sparkle like jewels. People are more or less value-blind, more or less capable of

⁸ Similar options can be distinguished in the case of direct knowledge of what we ought to do, cf. Reiner 1951 141, Ewing 1947.

axiological aspect switches such as being struck by the injustice of an action⁹.

How might the intuitionist respond to this charge? He might point out that many types of non-perceptual intentionality manifest similarities with perception, similarities the limits of which can in principle be described. The theory of *Weltanschauungen* and the theory of primitive certainty try to delimit similarities between world-views and certainties, on the one hand, and perception, on the other hand. Similarly, he may argue that values really do resemble colours in the following respect: there is a colour-space and (at least one) value-space and in each case a variety of internal relations which constitute these spaces. Or that just as visual perception is enmeshed in a visual horizon, so too awareness of value is enmeshed in a horizon of values.

Perhaps the first choice to be made in considering the different types of intuitionism is that between intuitionism of an affective or conative stripe and other forms, intellectual or perceptual. English intuitionists, from Moore to the intuitionist in Strawson's wonderful dialogue and later¹⁰ have traditionally opted for intuitionism of a cold, intellectual or perceptual variety. This form of intuitionism has one great weakness as against its hot, conative or affective rivals: it cannot do justice to the fact that grasp of value motivates, not – as Humeanism has it – by pushing but rather by revealing what in the world pulls us in different directions. Perceptual intuitionism has no reply to the objection that, as a matter of fact, we have no sensory value organs. Intellectual intuitionism, on the other hand, requires some non-intellectual grasp of value in order to function, just as intellectual knowledge of essential truths requires some perceptual or make-believe perceptual input to get going.

The view that emotions, affects or desires can furnish knowledge of values in certain optimal circumstances goes back to Husserl and Carnap. Elsewhere I have given my reasons for rejecting popular, contemporary versions of this view: emotions, affects and desires are

⁹ Cf. Feldman 2005, Ruyer 1948 ch. 1.

¹⁰ Strawson 1949a, cf Strawson 1949, Lucas 1971 and ed. Stratton-Lake 2002.

reactions to values we have or seem to have knowledge of but because of their valence or polarity cannot be pieces of knowledge¹¹.

The view that it is possible to feel value, what I have here called being struck by value, and that this is a form of epistemic contact with value was defended by a quintet of realist phenomenologists – Reinach¹², Scheler, Hildebrand, Hartmann and Reiner¹³. But the tale of their elaboration of the view is a cautionary one. By far the fullest account and defence of the view was given by Dietrich von Hildebrand in two early papers (1916, 1922). He there builds on the earlier versions of the view given by Reinach and Scheler. But Hildebrand's later accounts of direct knowledge of values contain no mention of *Wertfühlen* as he had earlier understood this phenomenon. Some of its roles are taken over by what he calls a grasp or perception of value (*Werterfassen*) (*Ästhetik I* 1977 349, 1973 *Ethik* 240), which resembles what he had earlier called *Wertsehen*, that is to say, a type of non-affective perceptual intuition. Some of its other roles are taken over by what he calls *das Affiziertwerden*: being affected by, being moved, touched or stirred by value (Hildebrand 1973 *Ethik* 237, 1977 *Ästhetik I* 53). Being affected by value is put forward by the later Hildebrand as the foundation for affective responses to value such as emotions. But Hildebrand is careful not to call it a form of cognition. There is indeed a very good reason for denying to it any epistemic status: being moved has a positive or negative valence. It is a primitive response. Being moved by injustice or corruption is not like being moved by gracefulness. Thus Hildebrand, the most convincing advocate of the view, seems to have dropped the claim that we can feel values and that this is a form of knowledge.

¹¹ Mulligan 2007. For Husserl's view, cf Mulligan 2004. For Carnap's version, cf. Carnap 1974 §152. There is a view which represents a compromise between the claim that emotions may constitute knowledge of value and the view that only feeling value can do the job. A friend of the view that emotions present value and sometimes constitute knowledge of value might reply to the objection that emotions typically have valence, unlike knowledge, by pointing to the affective indifference points between scorn and respect, sadness and joy etc. These are neither positive nor negative. They are, he might claim, feelings of value.

¹² Reinach 1989 104, 150, 158, 295-301, 497.

¹³ Reiner 1951 135; for details, see Mulligan 2004.

A distinction between something like an affective grasp of value, on the one hand, and affective reactions to what is so grasped, on the other hand, goes back at least to the moral sense theory of Hutcheson and – as Reinach and Hildebrand point out - those he influenced, such as the (so called) pre-critical Kant (for example, in his 1764 *Preisschrift*). Hutcheson thinks that just as “exciting reasons” presuppose instincts and affections so, too, “justifying reasons” presuppose a moral sense. But he seems to have thought of the moral sense as what we have above called being affected or as a form of (dis)approval. In other words, affective grasp of value is on his account a positive or negative affective phenomenon. Reinach therefore accuses Hutcheson of a „schwere Verwechslung von Ichzuständlichkeiten (*Gefühl*) mit *fühlenden Akten*“, of confusing emotions and the phenomenon of feeling value, a confusion which vitiates Hutcheson’s attempt to provide ethics with a foundation, a confusion which young Kant took over from Hutcheson¹⁴.

Hume, at one point, also employs something like a distinction between an affective grasp of value and reactions thereto:

What is honourable, what is fair, what is becoming, what is noble, what is generous, *takes possession of the heart*, and animates us to *embrace* and *maintain* it (Hume, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, Selby-Bigge, Section 1, p. 172; my emphases)

But what is it to take possession of a heart ? For someone to be affected, moved or stirred, or for him to be struck by value ? Burke occasionally refers *en passant* to an affective grasp of value which is not obviously either a way of being affected or a type of (dis)approval:

I never in my life chanced to see a peacock fly; and yet before, very long before, I considered any aptitude in his form for the aerial life, I was struck with the extreme beauty which raises that

¹⁴ Reinach 1989 497; cf. Hildebrand 1916 203-4, Baumgardt 1933 210-203.

bird above many of the best flying fowls in the world (Burke, *Treatise*, Section VI)

...whenever either of these happen to be struck with any natural elegance or greatness, or with these qualities in any work of art,...(Burke, “On Taste”)

(The idioms employed by Hume and Burke are not of course always a good guide to their philosophical views). In the century of Hume and Burke a distinction was often made between delicacy of feeling (Feinfühligkeit) and coarseness of feeling (Grobfühligkeit). There is (in)sensitiveness to boorishness, rudeness and elegance. And although there is a delicacy of feeling there is no delicacy of emotion.

The divine Jane, who is steeped in the best of eighteenth century thought¹⁵, writes of Mr. Rushworth that he was “from the first struck with the beauty of Miss Bertram”; and that there “was a charm, perhaps, in [Edmund’s] sincerity, his steadiness, his integrity, which Miss Crawford might be able to feel, though not equal to discuss with herself” (*Mansfield Park* ch 4. ch. 7).

If we follow the realist phenomenologists in thinking that it is possible to be struck by value¹⁶ and if we think that this form of intuitionism is superior to its rivals, the view must be confronted with two options which all forms of intuitionism face.

The first option concerns *time*. Is the phenomenon of feeling value an episode, a an enduring state or sometimes one and sometimes the other ? Being struck by value is an episode, something that happens. It is the episode of coming to be affectively acquainted with some value of someone or something at a time. Coming to be acquainted with something and being acquainted with something are not, of course, the same thing. Making the perceptual acquaintance of someone or something is an episode. Being acquainted with that thing

¹⁵ Cf. Ryle 1971

¹⁶ On being struck by value, see Kolnai’s account of “Wertbetontheit” (Kolnai 1927 57-73, Kolnai 1977 100)

or person is a state or disposition. Typically, the episode marks the beginning of the state or disposition.

What might affective acquaintance with a value be? In the passage from Lawrence quoted above there is a reference to the pervasive but little studied phenomenon of models. Suppose that Sam in his youth comes to take Hans (a real person or a character in a novel) as a model, an exemplar (*Vorbild*). Hans incarnates some positive value, generosity or wit. He is a positive model for Sam. (There are also negative models or exemplars, *Gegenbilder*). The generosity or wit of Hans makes a mark on Sam. Thanks to his acquaintance with Hans, Sam is henceforth acquainted with the value of generosity or wit. If this account of the effect of models is plausible, then it is plausible to say that we are indeed affectively acquainted with values. Acquaintance of this sort typically precedes many of our affective reactions. It is often because certain values are important to us that we are struck by particular exemplifications of these values and react affectively.

Another reason for thinking that there is enduring affective acquaintance with values has to do with the relation between sensitivity to values and value-preferences. We often ascribe to each other preferences such as a preference for freedom over equality or for gracefulness over dumpiness or for kitsch over irony. Whatever else is true of such preferences they are preferences which, if they exist, may and often do endure. Now it is plausible to think that such preferences and sensitivity to values are mutually dependent.

The second option on which all forms of intuitionism ought to pronounce concerns the *scope* of value intuitionism. Many discussions of value intuitionism concentrate on ethical intuitionism and in particular, on the intuition of moral goodness or rightness. But there is no reason to think that what an intuitionist should say about our awareness of moral goodness is what he should say about our awareness of non-moral value, nor that what he should say about moral goodness is what he should say about our awareness of cowardice, sloth, of models and ethical exemplars or of aesthetic values. Suppose, for example, that moral value is determined by non-

moral value. The simplest version of such a view is provided by consequentialism. Another example of this type of view is the claim that a preference for what is more non-morally valuable over what is less non-morally valuable is morally good and that moral goodness is determined by such preferences. In each case it is unlikely that what is true of the way we grasp moral value will also be true of our grasp of non-moral value.

Some discussions of value intuitionism concentrate on aesthetic values, on our awareness of ugliness, the comic, prettiness and so on. But it is not obvious that what holds true of our grasp of aesthetic values holds true of our grasp of such sensory values as the pleasant and the unpleasant or of vital values such as health, sickness and decay. The locution “struck by” is perhaps used most frequently to refer to contact with aesthetic values. Similarly, Stendhal frequently refers to the capacity to “sentir” beauty but does not, as far as I can tell, use the verb in connexion with other types of value.

Does the phenomenon of being struck by value, of feeling values and disvalues, as I have described it, exist ?

Musil and Wittgenstein like to point out as an important and not sufficiently appreciated fact that aesthetic predicates can occur in the context of exclamations and interjections. In fact all value predicates can occur in the context of exclamations and interjections. One plausible account of one type of exclamation provides one good reason for thinking that we are indeed often struck by value.

Utterances express (manifest, intimate, indicate) mental states, acts and attitudes. Thus an order expresses a desire, a promise an intention and an assertion a piece of knowledge. In particular, exclamations and interjections express affective or conative acts, states or attitudes. Two very large categories of exclamations are (1) utterances dominated by emotion predicates and (2) utterances dominated by value predicates. In the first category, there is

How unhappy/sad/ashamed/wretched I am !

Here, other things being equal, the utterance expresses emotions of the types typically ascribed by the different emotion predicates. In the second category there is

What a fool I am/he is/you are !

How shameful/lovely/ridiculous/grotesque/vulgar !

How brutal/generous/alive/elegant she is !

Here no desire or other conative state is expressed or intimated. Do such utterances express emotions ? With one exception, I suggest, it is no part of the function of such utterances to express emotion, other things being equal. The exception is surprise. But such utterances express no other emotion. Suppose these utterances express no surprise. What affective state or act do they express ? They intimate or express the phenomenon of feeling or being struck by a value – the foolishness, shamefulness, loveliness, ridiculousness, brutality, generosity or vitality of someone or something. Suppose they express surprise. Then, I suggest, the surprise is a reaction to the novelty of the different felt values. Since “express” is not factive - a promise to F expresses an intention to F even if the speaker does not intend to F – we cannot yet conclude that we really do feel value. But if utterances in the second category are sometimes sincere, then they are evidence that we really do feel value¹⁷.

Intuitionism about values requires that some form of realism about values be true. How strong must such realism be? One type of realism about value is the buck-passing theory: roughly, for x to be valuable is just for some affective pro-attitude towards x to be justified or appropriate. Is this compatible with the type of affective intuitionism sketched here ? There are at least two reasons for doubting this. First, on the view set out here, emotions constitutively involve affective knowledge of value or apparent knowledge. Thus each emotion referred to in the *analysans* of the buck-passing schema will involve such knowledge or apparent knowledge. And then a regress threatens which does not seem to be harmless. Second, it is

¹⁷ Similarly, laughter is often the sudden reaction to felt value, for example, to the comedy of a situation or the funniness of a joke. Such laughter need not be the expression of any emotion. Indeed there are very few terms for emotional reactions to the comic. And what holds of laughter holds, too, of tears.

difficult to imagine what sort of epistemology of value might be compatible with the buck-passing theory¹⁸. There is certainly knowledge that certain emotions are justified or appropriate. But this knowledge is intellectual knowledge that. The buck-passing theory leaves no room for any sort of direct affective knowledge of value. So the type of realism which affective intuitionism requires is stronger than the type of realism the buck-passer can provide.

That realism about value is true is the first assumption I made at the beginning and it will have to remain an assumption. But it is worth pointing to the flaw in one influential alternative to realism about value, the persistent assimilation of values to colours. (This is an assimilation which, in other contexts, as we have seen, is also made by many intuitionists). Colours, it is argued, are mind-dependent and so are values and for similar reasons. But colours and colour concepts differ in the most fundamental ways from values and value concepts. Values, like states of affairs, facts, wholes, parts, classes, numbers and indeed objects, are *formal* objects. Colours are *material* objects. Very many value expressions, expressions for thin and thick values, occur as functors and functoriality is a mark of formality. No colour expressions occur as functors (*It is red that p). Colours are not formal objects. More puzzlingly, as Husserl and Scheler pointed out, values are both formal and material objects. There is a logic of values. But we are also (apparently) struck by a great variety of materially different values¹⁹.

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¹⁸ Contemporary buck-passers tend to say very little about the epistemology of value. The grandfather of the buck-passing theory, Brentano, on the other hand, gives an account of what it is to know that something is valuable – we experience the inner correctness of, say, love of love - and thinks that this provides us with an account of what it is to be valuable.

¹⁹ Thanks to Julien Dutant for discussion of some of this material.

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