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Value and justification

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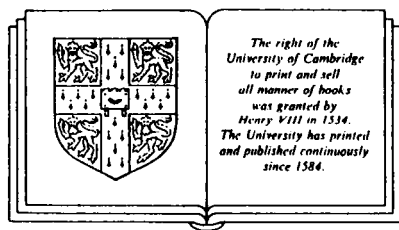
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In memory of Stanley Benn

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Preface

This book is intended to be a contribution to axiology, moral theory, and political philosophy. However, those interested in these fields are apt to find much of the material unfamiliar. It is perhaps advisable to alert readers at the outset of the ways in which this book is unlike most others in these fields.

Most obviously, in the second chapter I offer a fairly detailed analysis of emotions. In the course of this analysis, I explore problems in the philosophy of mind as well as the psychology and neurophysiology of emotions. Students of ethics and political philosophy may be tempted to skip these discussions, supposing that they are not important for the arguments concerning morality and justification that are presented in Part II. But they really are foundational: the theory of emotion is the basis for the theory of value. I will try to show that once we have resolved some of the issues concerning, say, the intentionality of feeling states in the context of the theory of emotion, many puzzles are resolved, and pitfalls avoided, in the theory of value. And, once we have a good grasp of the nature of value, we are in the position to approach some of the problems of contemporary moral and political philosophy in a new light.

Although laying the foundations of a theory of justice in a theory of emotions may seem odd today, it would not, I think, have struck Hobbes or Hume so. For, in many ways, my project is in the spirit of their great works: I seek to show that the foundations of moral and political theory lie in certain important features of human psychology. Political theorists – especially those trained in political science departments – will probably find this approach congenial. That political theory rests on an understanding of human nature is a fundamental presupposition of that sort of political theorizing exemplified by John Plamenatz. But, although po-

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litical theorists have remained true to this insight of Hobbes and Hume, they have generally sacrificed the rigor of those great philosophers. The status of the claims made by today's political theorists about human nature are as difficult to evaluate as they are interesting. Often they seem little more than possible stories about the nature of human beings or, as they are sometimes described, "visions" of human nature. To be sure, political theorists in recent years have relied more on psychological theories; as do I, many political theorists have discussed the work of Piaget and Kohlberg, for instance. But, typically, all this remains at a very general and abstract level. In this work, I draw on the psychology of emotions, attitude theory, and studies of values. Those working in these fields have collected enlightening data and have developed some relatively well-supported theories, which provide a rich source for moral and political philosophers.

Nevertheless, although I try to learn from attitude theorists and psychologists of emotion as well as from philosophers of mind, my aim here is to develop theories of value and moral justification, not to contribute to these other fields. But, even when I am concentrating on the theories of value and justification, my approach may seem somewhat alien to contemporary moral and political philosophers because I provide extensive citations to the relevant literature, especially in axiology. I have discovered that some of my colleagues are nearly scandalized by this. A friend who is a moral and political philosopher – and who shall remain nameless – has told me that my references are a sign of bad upbringing. But no student of value theory can fail to be surprised by the good work that was done – especially by Austrian and American axiologists – in the first half of this century, contributions that have been almost entirely forgotten. When reading recent publications dealing with ethics on problems of value, I have often felt that philosophers were proclaiming that they had once again invented the wheel – and often enough one that had been rounder forty years ago. So I have cited much of this earlier work because I have learned much from it. However, I also hope that others will learn from it, and I intend my notes as guides, suggesting where they may find useful discussions. I conceive of philosophy as a cooperative endeavor, encompassing those who have worked before, one's contemporaries, and our students; my

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citations are a sign of my debts and my assistance for those who may want to study these problems in depth.

Writing this book has been a cooperative experience in another way. During the years I have been working on these problems, I was fortunate enough to be Stanley Benn's colleague in the Philosophy Department of the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. We had worked together from 1979 to 1982, coediting a book on *Public and Private in Social Life*. After completing that explicitly cooperative project, we each set about writing books in moral theory. Almost all the core ideas in the first eight chapters of this book were discussed – well, actually argued about – in our daily philosophical lunches, which more than once finally concluded in the early evening. Problems were raised, solutions proposed, rejected, and revised in such a way that it was often unclear who was writing which book. I cannot even begin to say which of these ideas are “mine” and which were first raised by Stanley, except for the key arguments in §§17.2–17.4 and 22.2–22.3, which were certainly inspired by his paper on “Freedom, Autonomy, and the Concept of a Person.”¹ At one point, our agreement on basic issues was close enough to write a paper jointly, entitled “Practical Rationality and Commitment,”² presenting a theory of rational action that provides a foundation for both our theories. And yet, for all that, our views remain opposed on the most basic of issues: a fundamental aim of this book is to defend a “subjectivist” account of value, something Stanley consistently rejected. In his *A Theory of Freedom*, he honored me by telling the world why I am wrong; yet, in a note that bespeaks of our cooperative experience, he indicates that his response to my theory is partly of my devising.³ And, that, perhaps, was the greater honor.

Indebtedness is not characterized by scarcity. As enormous as is my debt to Stanley Benn, room enough remains for others. Fred D'Agostino, as a colleague and friend at the Australian National University (ANU) and later when he moved to the University of New England, has been a constant source of encouragement, which was often more needed than he might have thought. His own work on justification originally spurred me to

1 *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1975–6): 103–30.

2 *The American Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (July 1986): 255–66.

3 *A Theory of Freedom*, pp. 79–82.

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think about these matters. Fred was also kind enough to read more than one draft of the manuscript for this book, providing both sound advice on philosophical matters and correcting the all-too-abundant errors. J. Roland Pennock read Part I and much of Part II in an early draft; he has an uncanny sense for weak arguments, and I almost always found it necessary to respond to his queries. In addition, Professor Pennock has fought a valiant battle for the English language against my prose; the reader can only reflect with dismay what this book must have been like before his assistance. My thanks, too, to Ralph Kennedy for his useful comments on an early draft. John W. Chapman was also kind enough both to read a draft and discuss my general approach. But my great debt to him remains as a teacher. His lesson, that political philosophy traces back to theories of human nature, informs this book, though, to paraphrase Bernard Bosanquet, it has returned to him in a form that he will not be able to recognize.

At the ANU we were lucky enough to have visits by distinguished philosophers, who often spurred me to think about issues that I had blissfully ignored. Among them, Loren E. Lo-masky was kind enough to argue with me about most topics – from practical rationality to the nature of liberalism – and I always benefited. He also read the penultimate draft of the entire book, and was all too honest in his responses; I hope some day to pay him back in kind. My colleague at the ANU, Philip Pettit, provided useful insights (even though he is a consequentialist). Our lunch, in which I somehow ended up defending David Gauthier's *Morals by Agreement*, had, as the reader will see, far-reaching consequences. John Kleinig exposed me to relentless questioning one summer afternoon in New York, which led me (after a rest) to go home and think harder about some things. Two Ph.D. students at the ANU were also a great help. Stephen Buckle, who was writing a thesis on natural-law theories of property, taught me a great deal. Daniel Skubik, also a student in our department, was kind enough to read an early draft of Part I and immediately pointed out a contradiction.

A draft of the book was completed at the University of Queensland. David John Gow displayed great patience in helping me formulate the argument of Chapter IX; as a favor, he talked slowly using small words, as is befitting when a statistician talks

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to a political philosopher. I also greatly benefited from discussions with Sharon Beattie and Simon Jackman. My deep thanks are extended to the Department of Government of the University of Queensland, which was extraordinarily generous in providing the facilities that I needed to revise.

This long project was completed at the University of Minnesota, way up north in Duluth. Loren Lomasky enticed me from the warmth of Australia to the winter of northern Minnesota with the claim that, given the heated philosophic exchange in Duluth, I would not notice the difference. Well, I have noticed *some* differences, but he was right about the quality and liveliness of Duluth philosophy. I would like to thank my colleagues in both the political science and philosophy departments for making the University of Minnesota, Duluth, such an interesting place to work.

I have been lucky enough to have had research assistants who helped me do many things quicker, and with less pain, than would otherwise have been the case. I am especially grateful to Ra Foxton, who helped me begin, and Mary Callahan, who helped me finish. Along the way, C. T. O'Connell, David Bradon-Mitchell, and D. Bryne provided valuable help.

My first attempt at formulating the theory of value and justification, "Subjective Value and Justificatory Political Theory," was published in *NOMOS XXVIII: Justification*. Much, I think, was right in that argument, but a great deal was wrong; in any case, the position articulated in this book is rather different. My account of friendship and justice, which is important to the argument of §17 of this volume was first presented in a panel where I commented on an essay by Martin Golding; this short piece was published in the *Bulletin of the Australian Society of Legal Philosophy*.⁴ The account of practical rationality – which I have partially revised – was published in *The American Philosophical Quarterly* and was expanded upon in an article in *Ethics*.⁵ The argument for the rationality of moral action and our commitment to moral justification was first presented in "The Commitment to the Com-

4 "On Community and Justice: A Reply to Professor Golding," vol. 9 (October 1985): 197–204.

5 "Practical Rationality and Commitment" and "Practical Reason and Moral Persons," vol. 100 (October 1989), pp. 127–48.

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mon Good.”⁶ My essay “A Contractual Justification of Redistributive Capitalism” reproduces parts of Chapters VIII and IX.⁷

Various formulations of my argument – from the stage where it was a glimmer in my eye to more or less what appears here – were presented to the American Political Science Association, the International Political Science Association, the Australasian Association for Philosophy, the Department of Economics of Wake Forest University, the Department of Traditional and Modern Philosophy at the University of Sydney, the Philosophy Colloquium at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, and, of course, to the Department of Philosophy, Research School of Social Sciences of the Australian National University. My thanks to all the participants, and to all those who have helped whom I have been unable to mention.

G.F.G.

6 In *On Political Obligation*, edited by Paul Harris (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990), pp. 26–64.

7 *NOMOS XXXI: Markets and Justice*, edited by John W. Chapman and J. Roland Pennock (New York: New York University Press, 1989), pp. 89–121.