FOUNDATIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF VALUE

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AN EXAMINATION OF VALUE AND VALUE THEORIES

BY

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P. I. O.

PREFACE

THIS book has developed from a dissertation written at Cambridge in 1929. Owing to the importunity of external circumstances I have been able to devote myself but rarely and spasmodically to philosophical thought since that time. But my convictions on the Philosophy of Value have matured almost unconsciously to myself during this period, until I felt that the time had come for their formulation, lest ceasing to develop further they should become obscured. I regard the present formulation as a stage for further advance. While I do not regard the opinions expressed in it as final, I do not expect to depart radically from them. The actual writing was compressed into three weeks, the evenings alone of which were available, at a time when access to libraries was barred. I can only apologise to my readers for the deficiencies which of necessity remain in a work produced in these conditions.

My thanks are due to the editors of *Mind* and the *Journal of Philosophy* for permission to reproduce portions of articles from those periodicals.

Finally, I would acknowledge the immeasurable debt I owe to those who guided my studies in philosophy. What little I have achieved I owe entirely to the kind and patient teaching of Dr F. R. Tennant, to the wise and inspiring conversation of Dr Oman, and to the lectures of Dr Broad.

H. OSBORNE

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INTRODUCTION

CH. VON EHRENFELS wrote in the introduction to his *System der Werttheorie* (1897): "Seit den griechischen und römischen Ethikern des Altertums hat es wohl keine Zeit gegeben, in welcher die Werttheorie, únd was an Problemen sachlich mit ihr zusammenhängt, so sehr im Blickfelde der allgemeinen Aufmerksamkeit gestanden wäre, wie gegenwärtig". Dr F. C. S. Schiller somewhere remarks that the emergence and elaboration of Philosophy of Value is destined to be regarded as the peculiar contribution of our age to the development of philosophy. Indeed it is not too much to assert that general metaphysics can no longer be treated in divorce from considerations of Value. Theory of Value is now a no less necessary part of the equipment of every competent philosopher, than is epistemology.

It is usual to trace back to Kant the emergence of Value as an independent concept forming the subject-matter of a special branch of philosophy. In his *Philosophy of Religion* Höffding says: "We are indebted to Kant's philosophy for the independence of the problem of value as apart from the problem of knowledge. He taught us to distinguish between valuation and explanation". Kemp Smith writes in the introduction to his *Commentary on the Critique of Pure Reason* (p. lvi): "What Kant does—stated in broad outline—is to distinguish between the problems of *existence* and the problems of *value*, assigning the former to science and the latter to philosophy". Before Kant ethical propositions were

thought to be derivable from theoretical (non-ethical) propositions. The practice of Rationalism was first to construct a theoretical view of the nature of Reality and then, by apparently logical inference, to derive an ethical system from it. Kant set out to show that the ultimate problems of metaphysics can be solved from ethical data and from ethical data alone; he succeeded in showing the self-sufficiency of ethical ideas and their independence of natural and non-ethical facts.

The immediate importance of this development was unfortunately clouded in Kant's own work by the excessive formalism of his ethics, and the Philosophy of Value as we know it rather took its start in the reaction from Kant's exaggerated intellectualism. Less direct, but hardly less important to the development of the concept of Value, was the revolution in the notion of personality which he crystallised and largely created. For the Scholastics, and during the age of Rationalism, the necessary and sufficient criterion of personality was rationality, by which was meant the power to recognise one's own identity through time. Wolff's definition of personality was as follows: "Persona dicitur ens quod memoriam sui conservat, hoc est, meminit se esse idem illud ens quod ante in hoc vel isto fuit statu". This notion is carried on into the nineteenth century by Herbart's "Personality is self-consciousness, wherein the ego regards itself as being one and the same in all its manifold reactions" (*Wke.* III, 60). It is not yet extinct. Kant added the ethical nature as an essential factor in the notion of personality. In virtue of "animality" man is a living being; in virtue of "rationality" he is a rational being; in virtue of "personality" he is autonomous and

responsible. Personality is "that which raises man above himself (as a portion of the sensuous world), that which connects him with an order of things which only reason can think, an order which at the same time has under it the whole sensuous world and with it the empirically-determined existence of man in time and the whole of all purposes" (v, 91, Hart.). By his connection of Freedom and Moral Responsibility with the Pure Practical Reason Kant made not self-consciousness only, but self-consciousness together with self-determination, the necessary and sufficient criterion of personality.

Kant profoundly distrusted the sensuous and passional sides of human nature. He insisted that the apprehension of worth is an act of pure intellectual intuition, in which the emotions play no part. Idealistic theories about Value can trace their origin fairly reasonably from Kant. But psychological theories derive rather from the age immediately subsequent to Kant, and from those aspects in it which were in revolt against the excessive intellectualism of Kant. It was typical of that age to be interested in feeling and will and in those aspects of the psyche in respect of which persons differ. It was engrossed with individuality rather than with the general and universal. Feeling and will are a mode of "rapport" with actuality and they were thought to constitute knowledge of a different aspect of reality from that revealed in theoretical cognition. Their object was said to be *value* or *meaning*. In the early stages the alternatives of subjectivism and objectivism about Value were not envisaged in clear contrast. Feeling is both personal or individual and may be objective in the sense of universal or generally shared. It was thought that in feeling that

has universality may be revealed the *concrete nature*, the *meaning*, or the *values* of reality. This sort of view, partaking of the mystical, is typical of what has come to be known as Romanticism.

G. E. Schultze and Jacob Fries, disciples and critics of Kant, both laid great stress on the concept of Value and intimately connected it with feeling. Fries held that apprehension of value consists in feeling and that in feeling we possess a mode of intuitively apprehending the eternal and infinitely Real as it is manifested in the finite and empirical world. The psychological investigation of valuation was carried further by Herbart. Value was connected again more intimately with personality by Lotze and Benecke. They—and in particular Lotze—are not consistent. But the theory which they most generally stand for is the following. The valuable is the proper object of pleasure-pain feeling. Pleasure-pain feeling is an indicator of favourable or harmful influences upon the natural development of personality. Thus "valuableness" is a property of furthering, and "disvalue" of thwarting, the natural development of personality. Benecke writes: "Wir schätzen die Werte aller Dinge nach dem (vorübergehenden oder bleibenden) Steigerungen und Herabstimmungen, welche durch dieselben für unsere psychische Entwicklung bedingt werden".

The course of Value Theory was hereafter carried on chiefly (*a*) in the Ritschlian school of theology and (*b*) by the Austrian economists. The modern psychological theories start directly from the epoch-making works of Meinong and von Ehrenfels. The heritage of the confusion inherent in Romanticism has lain heavy upon them. They still lag tardily behind psychology in the realisation

that feeling and emotion, though involving "rapport" with an external world of actuality, and directors of theoretical speculation, are not themselves a mode of cognition.

Finally, Realistic theories of Value have arisen more recently from the analogy of Realism in epistemology. They differ from the Kantian tradition in using the analogy of sensation rather than the analogy of immediate intellectual intuition of ultimate truths, to explain the apprehension of Value.

Idealism, or the practical faith in Value, is the proper appanage of the human spirit. I speak not of a philosophical creed, and still less of a predisposition to optimism, but rather of a universal and fundamental psychological motive. The vague and tentative insight by which man pierces beyond the present and "created" to the attainment of a dim and evanescent anticipation of a future stage in his spiritual development guarantees both the content of his aim and the continuance of his endeavour. The darkly visible "not yet" impels in the name of Good or Value, and invests itself with the force of a "must be". In an evolving world the machinery of evolution becomes self-conscious—albeit but gropingly and mistily—at the level of spirit and personality. In the study of man, if it be sufficiently freed from parochiality, we can observe evolution as it were from within. Human progress has been controlled but not directed by the vicissitudes of external environment. Biological needs are always with us, but at no point are they a whole-cause. Their operation is negative. They set the limits and narrow the channel of evolution; but the

formative and directing principle lies in human nature itself. It is that radical though volcanic instinct of idealism which impels man to "adapt" himself to something within and yet pointing beyond himself. The urge of the ideal is expressed in the imperative mood. By disobeying external or environmental claims a man may forfeit his life; by disloyalty to the demands of the ideal he must destroy his soul, or in other words his proper humanity. The idealistic impulse is the motive force and steering wheel of progress. It finds its intellectual expression in philosophy, its imaginative and emotional embodiment in religion.

Herein is revealed the fundamental inadequacy of philosophical hedonism. Pleasure is essentially static, clinging to past pleasant experience. It does not contain within itself the seeds of new advance. True happiness has been found by the unanimous experience of all ages to be a by-product of active endeavour in pursuit of a concrete ideal to which the enthusiasm of the whole personality may be harnessed. Pleasure becomes an end in its own right only at those periods of slackness when the impulse to idealism and the possibility of progress are temporarily effete. The dissatisfaction attendant upon idealism is the incentive to progress; contentedness the drag on the evolutionary wheel.

That the ideal—under which term must be subsumed the related concepts of duties and moralities, racial and personal, and the "Ideal Values", which stand in a category apart from all other objects of human endeavour and are held to be incommensurable with them—that this sense of the ideal has been a steady and a powerful directing agency of progress is a plain fact of

history which could only be denied by those who, in virtue of behaviouristic or biological preconvictions, are unable to do justice to the psychological existence of ideals. So long as we remain planted upon the firm ground of facts and forbear to theorise about them, it is indubitable that constant attempted pursuit of Value has been the main propulsive force in the development of mankind. But the instinct of idealism is not simply a kind of incoherent clairvoyance of a possible "not yet", carrying with it the unique compulsion of duty. It is sustained by the projection upon the visible world of qualities whose ultimate origin is to be sought in the depths of the human soul. Man is confronted with the vastness and the mystery, with the seeming impermeability to spiritual ideals, of the physical universe. The stirrings of Value within him impel him to postulate a Reality outside himself compensatory at once of his own deficiencies and of the alien nature of his apparent environment. Thus at the very heart of idealism lie that questioning of the apparent and postulation of an ideal Reality, from which both religion and philosophy spring. Philosophy is the quest for certain knowledge of the Reality whose very possibility is first revealed by faith. The diffidence of the individual is unable to support the pregnant idealism of his nature, which irresistibly impels him to belief in a Reality invested with a majesty corresponding to his own weakness, and a holiness for which he longs. Every man is pusillanimous in his own interests: he draws upon the strength of the gods when fighting the cause of the gods. The active idealism in man demands sanction and support from a Reality—religionists say from a personal Reality—transcending individual and society.

It is the faith of religion and the hope of philosophy that this belief is, at its central core, veridical. Philosophy, no less than religion, is projective through and through. No philosopher can *prove* the existence of anything other than his own thought. At most he can prove that the belief in solipsism is for him impossible.

While religion remains essentially faith that the aspiration to "god-likeness" is an effort for rapprochement to a genuine Reality, philosophy undertakes the task of grasping that Reality in thought and substantiating faith by reason. Articulate philosophy emerges from the mythopoeic and collective thought of pre-philosophical ages, which, says M. Robin, "s'accomplit d'une façon impersonnelle, obscure et continue; il accompagne et exprime le mouvement des mœurs et du sentiment religieux".[1] Here the individual contribution is submerged beneath the collective ownership. "La pensée distincte n'est jamais que le dernier anneau d'une longue chaîne de pensées obscures, de besoins et d'actions qui l'ont préparée. Tout commence dans l'inconscient; et s'il est faux de soutenir que l'homme sans la conscience ne serait pas pour cela plus mauvaise machine intellectuelle, il est certain du moins que son apparition est tardive, et qu'elle a, dans ses premiers pas, à recueillir, sous bénéfice d'inventaire, un héritage énorme qu'elle n'a pas accumulé."[2] The new factor which is responsible for the birth of self-conscious philosophy is the spirit of criticism which would substitute rationally grounded knowledge for uncritical acceptance of traditional belief,

[1] "La Pensée Grecque."
[2] A. Lalande, "Revue de Synthèse historique", ii, 205 (quoted by Henri Berr in his Introduction to the above).

would eliminate error, and supplant one-sided dogma by clear vision. Thus philosophy has a double nature—critical and constructive. "As a creed of life philosophy has to meet two needs. Men expect of it a comprehensive, securely based, and, as far as possible, complete structure of all knowledge, and at the same time a definite conviction which will prove a support in life."[2] In different ages and individuals the one or the other of these functions has predominated. Preponderance of the critical attitude, with its fanatical devotion to "certainty" in season and out of season, reduces philosophy to the status of a handmaid to the sciences, and in the last resort to a mere game for those who enjoy intellectual gymnastics for their own sake. Atrophy of the critical impulse leads philosophy back to imaginative and mythopoeic creation. Philosophy has, however, a creative function in harmony with the general impulse of Idealism. "It is one of the permanent aims of philosophy to seek a true Reality behind apparent Reality." Philosophy is the articulate and critical expression of faith in the reality of the ideal, intellectual, ethical and aesthetic. Critical thought alone cannot be creative and cannot lead to new knowledge. It is essentially introspective, being limited to examination and purification of the thought-process itself.

The elaboration of the intellectual ideal (for coherence and applicability, the criteria of theoretical philosophy, are intellectual ideals) has occupied the greater part of the history of philosophy proper. The examination of Value in general, and the ethical and aesthetic values in particular, is the special problem of

[1] Windelband, "Introduction to Philosophy", Engl. trans., p. 27.

philosophy in our own day. It is the business of philosophy to investigate intellectually the instinctive assumption that the sense of Value, which has played and plays so important a function in the spiritual evolution of mankind, is a faculty of awareness and does mediate knowledge of values which are objective to humanity and integral to the nature of ultimate Reality. The philosopher must test the intellectual grounds of this primitive act of faith. When the philosophy of Value first emerged as distinct from theoretical philosophy it was assumed, as we have seen, by Kant that we have immediate intellectual intuition of principles of Right and Value which form the primordial warp of ultimate Reality, and by his immediate successors that in certain feelings we have immediate knowledge, of a non-theoretical kind, of the ultimate and eternal nature of Reality, which in sense-perception and theoretical knowledge we know only imperfectly and as it were in images. The development of psychological theory has tended to distinguish feeling and emotion sharply from awareness. And the trend of psychological theory of Value has been to deny both our knowledge and the existence of values outside ourselves.

The second problem of the philosopher is to separate individual, changing and temporary valuations from the persistent valuations of the race, and secondary and derived valuations from primary and fundamental valuations. This is, I think, the task of psychology. The general unsatisfactoriness of psychological theories of Value has been due to the attempt to solve the former problem by psychology, a necessarily impossible task. For psychology is a science, limited to the sphere of

facts, and cannot pronounce upon questions of validity. This second problem, which does belong to psychology, in the widest sense of the word, has as yet been hardly investigated. Its investigation is of course not dependent upon the prior solution of the former problem. Only when the two problems are confused is the result disastrous.

The following pages are devoted solely to the problem of validity. They do not pretend to offer an exhaustive discussion of that problem but to lay down the logical foundations for such a discussion. Still less do they pretend to offer an exhaustive survey of the philosophy of Value. As there are several theories in the field about the nature of valuation and the validity of our sense of Value, the discussion has naturally taken the form of a classification of those theories and examination of their logical bases. It has been the writer's endeavour to give a sound foundation for future work rather than to aspire to specious but precarious originality. He has thought it very unlikely that any theory backed by serious and competent thinkers should be *wholly* wrong and very possible that no essential aspect of the problem has been wholly neglected by so many previous thinkers. Yet it has been necessary to recognise how much the philosophy of Value has suffered from the temporal priority of theoretical philosophy, since even now many, and perhaps most, of its exponents have come to it with habits of mind and predisposition to belief already formed in the field of theoretical metaphysics.

The spiritual ascent of man, alone so far as we know among the evolving strands of the world, is fuliginously illuminated by incipient self-consciousness, a fitful glow

from within. We see some little way in advance, in so far as the future stages of the spiritual growth of the race are stirred as ideals to motion within our being. For self-consciousness is the power to look within. We can contemplate in ourselves, and so in others, the process in which we partake. The ideal when recognised compels with the force of an imperative sharply contrasted with the natural force of desires and unidealised impulses. But though a particular ideal when assented to is always imperative, the continued psychological validity of the ideal in general is found to depend, in all but some few outstanding minds of a rationalistic temper, upon a general faith in its harmony with a cosmic Reality transcending the individual and the race as a whole. Religion is the deliberate acceptance of this faith in a cosmic Reality in sympathy with, and including within itself, the ultimate ideals or values of humanity. Philosophy is the justification or refutation of this faith in an intellectual system ruled by the intellectual ideals of coherence and applicability. A complete system of philosophy must therefore be ultimately a philosophy of Value.