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The construction of the concept of value*

A. Departure point (philosophy of values) Question: what should I do?

I. Departure point of the philosophy of values

The philosophy of values undoubtedly has its origins in purely intellectual and theoretical interests. The concept of 'value' (as used in axiology, as opposed to economics) is a superordinate concept for at least two concepts that are well known and commonly used: "good" and "beauty"; hence, the study of matters related to value stems in part from a natural desire to unify knowledge, to seek a common ground for ethics and aesthetics. But this is not the main starting point. The main starting point is not theoretical or cognitive; it is, I believe, unquestionably practical.¹

* Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, ref. no. III-181, file 16 (originally, file 16 was labeled by Elzenberg with the following information: "Value and duty. [formal axiology]. Part one: The concept of value and duty. Materials and drafts predating 1939"). The text is 50 pages long. It is not dated. It was probably written in 1934. The author added the following note: "Later edition (Skolimowska). Incomplete; many things will be added from the earlier version".

¹ Side note: "This starting point cannot be a fixed one, for the simple reason that these two concepts may not be necessary. Ethics has often managed fine without the concept of 'good'. We must therefore first demonstrate that it is nec-

Admitting to practical intent is not, generally speaking, in the spirit of modern ethical thought; and if moralists (even the most serious ones) renounce it, what can be said about general axiology, whose connection with practice is notoriously more loose. Intellectuals and anti-intellectuals agree – for various reasons – against such a practical understanding of the tasks of ethics or axiology. (Anti-intellectuals consider it sheer madness for anyone to seek guidance for life in purely intellectual speculation. Intellectuals are quick to consider it negative (derogatory) to subordinate speculative effort to some unworthy practical goals; they also seek all kinds of arguments to demonstrate the lack of connection between these fields [and imperceptibly, in this area, I am moving towards supporting the position of anti-intellectuals]. I do not think they are right, and that this prejudice is anything other than prejudice. It is here – and certainly not for the last time in the course of these arguments – that the author must admit that the ancient world was more correct in matters of axiology than modern philosophers. The ancients believed in the practical effectiveness of inquiries into value and boldly – regardless of greater or lesser intellectualism – put this motif at the forefront. I will not mention the Stoics and Epicureans, but even Aristotle (who was surely an intellectual!) did not seem to think that it was beneath him to subordinate inquiry to practical purposes. “These inquiries”, he says, “are not undertaken for purely theoretical purposes, like many others, for we do not investigate in order to become good; there would be no need for it”.² “In order to become good”: this is how the Greek philosopher puts it in his own language and terminology. We – perhaps more in line with the prevailing (possibly) approach to ethics in modern times – will set ourselves the same task, but rather in terms of: while practicing axiology, I seek answers to the questions: “What ought I to do?” Or: “How ought I to behave?”

essary, and this can only be done by starting with the practical question: “What should I do?”

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (II, 2) 1103. The above passage in translation by Daniela Gromska: “Since these considerations have – in contrast to all others – a non-theoretical purpose (for we are considering courage not in order to understand what it is, but in order to become courageous, because otherwise we would derive no benefit from these considerations), therefore, we must consider issues related to action, namely, how it should be done; for, as has already been mentioned, it also determines the direction of our permanent dispositions. That one should act in accordance with right judgement is a common view, which we accept as a premise” (Aristotle, *Complete Works*, vol. 5, Warsaw 1996, p. 105) [editor’s note].

So when I ask, “What ought I to do?” I am obviously not asking axiology to give me a casuistic answer on how I should behave in my specific individual life situation or in all possible circumstances of life. I do not expect axiology – axiology itself – to take me by the hand *hic et nunc* or to provide me with a catalogue of all the possible duties that may await me. I expect one thing from it: to indicate certain [very] general rules of conduct that are binding on me, rational principles within which other factors, not revealed by axiological speculation, would determine the choice of conduct. That is one thing.

Secondly, clarification is needed (the word “I”). I am not only an individual, but also part of a series of communities – such as the nation (humanity), the community of rational beings in whose lives I participate and for whose behaviour I am *pour ma part* responsible. So I want to know not only what I should do, but what those wholes of which I am a part should do: my question is not solely a question of personal ethics, but falls within the scope of normative (practical) philosophy of culture, as a discipline concerning (the duties of societies). Add to this that I am also indirectly interested in how individuals whose behaviour I can influence should behave: for only then will I know how to influence them.

Thirdly, let us note the term ‘behave’ rather than ‘act’. By choosing this expression, I want to emphasize that it is not only about how I should act – and, consequently, what I should want – but also how I should behave where this behaviour takes place entirely within my psyche: and not primarily how I should feel (and, in a sense, think). There is no reason why I should assume *a priori* that only my actions are important, and not what takes place entirely within my psyche.

[This last issue is linked to a further, more complicated one. Alongside the fundamental question, ‘What ought I to do?’, there is a second, partly independent question: ‘Towards what should I feel positive emotions?’ (‘love’, ‘respect’, ‘praise’) More on this later.]

Let us move on to the objections.

Posing the question ‘What ought I to do?’ is without a premise. The premise is that I ought to do something [and that the question of duty makes sense, is a meaningful question]. Secondly, I assume that I do not know at this moment what I should do.³ Two fundamental objections are raised against these two premises. First: you should not do anything

³ A note in the margin: “The philosophy of values as a practical discipline can be combated primarily by questioning either of these two assumptions”.

(because the question of duty does not make sense at all).⁴ Second: you know perfectly well what you ought to do, and you do not need to ask axiology about it.

Let us examine the first objection.⁵

II. Refuting the objection: that the question 'What ought I to do?' is irrelevant

Kant raised the question 'What ought I to do?' in all its clarity and was met with, *inter alia*, the following accusation by Schopenhauer:⁶ According to Schopenhauer, Kant assumes 'that man somehow, of his own accord, comes up with the idea of investigating and inquiring (*erkundigen*) into the law governing his will, to which this will would have to submit and yield (*fügen*)'. According to Schopenhauer, this is never the case.

Let us immediately clarify this state of affairs. When I ask 'what ought I to do?', this does not mean that my freedom (awareness of freedom) *de iure* is the current and actual state of affairs, and that I would look around for a law that could restrict that freedom. The state of affairs is such that I assume that my freedom is already limited *de iure* at this moment, and I do not know how and by what. But why do I assume that it is limited? Because I have a sense of duty.⁷

[An explanation here]

Therefore, contrary to Schopenhauer, I agree and fully endorse the following description of the state of affairs by French social moralist Daniel Parodi⁸: "The only pure and intrinsic duty that is imposed a pri-

⁴ This objection should be distinguished from the positions of those who agree that the question is valid, but after examining the matter in detail, they dismiss it: you ought nothing, you are free (anarchism as a substantive doctrine: Stirner!).

⁵ A note in the margin: "The concept of duty exists, but it does not apply to anything".

⁶ *Grundlage der Moral*, §6, *Sämtliche Werke*, Insel Verlag III 532/3.

⁷ A note in the margin: "The fact that I should is, to me, as fundamental and self-evident as the fact that I am".

⁸ This most likely does not refer to Daniel Dominique Parodi, author of, *inter alia*, *Le problème moral et la pensée contemporaine*, Paris 1909. "Pure reason cannot hope, Parodi maintains, to find within itself the very substance of morality; it is given to man by society or instinct, and reason must criticize these givens. In doing so, it introduces its own disinterested goals and creates the essence of morality itself". Cit. after: E. Gilson, T. Langan, A. A. Maurer, *History of Contemporary Philosophy*, Warsaw 1977, p. 687a.

ori on a conscientious person is to fulfil all the conditions that enable us to reveal our specific duties. The only absolute duty is to (sincerely) want to fulfil one's duty".

However, opponents have an answer to this: the concept of duty is illusory. If the word 'ought to' can be replaced with a phrase that merely states a certain state of affairs, then sentences about duty become simply descriptive sentences – and there is no specific subject of thought to which the word 'ought to' corresponds. The closest thing is to replace it with psychological descriptive phrases – and that is what I am discussing here. [Sentences containing the word 'duty' can be replaced with sentences describing empirical facts. But that is the next level.] For now, it is claimed that there is no 'duty', but only the psychological fact of a 'sense of duty'; however, the fact that I have a sense of duty does not mean that I ought to⁹. My freedom *de iure* is therefore effectively unlimited. And here these psychologists logically come to the same conclusion as ethical anarchists (the latter through substantive research and the determination that duty does not apply to any behaviour). You are free, there are no constraints. Therefore, act according to your own *sic volo* – capricious and changeable moment by moment, or organized once and for all for life – but always deeply arbitrary. There is no reason to seek some law for the will.

There are numerous variants of the psychological theory of the word 'should' in relation to a rational subject, i.e. the psychological theory of duty (replacing duty with a 'sense of duty').¹⁰ Here are some of them.

'I should this or that' means: I am inclined to do this or that for fear of bad consequences if I do otherwise. Variants include the expressions: 'I should do this and that', meaning 'I am prepared to do this and that for fear of unspecified negative consequences that are anticipated if I were to do otherwise'. 'Unspecified' here means: 'it is not known what; where, from whom or from what it comes, and how it is causally related to the action'. [This fear itself can also be called a sense of duty. Or, finally,

⁹ A note in the margin: "It is true. There is a sense of duty as a psychological fact. For me, this sense is a sense of something I call 'duty', and the complement of 'duty' plays the same role here as 'colours' in expressing the 'seeing of colours'. We are talking here about an object called 'duty'. For this type of psychologists, however, the 'sense of duty' is only a special kind of feeling, and the complement of 'duty' plays a rather adjectival role, just like the complement of 'taste' in the expression 'taste sensation' i.e. a special kind of sensation. They deny that there is any subject of representation or presentation here, which could be called 'duty' or 'obligation'".

¹⁰ A note in the margin: "Holzapfel, Znamierowski".

'a sense of duty is a readiness to act in such and such a way by virtue of a habit formed under the influence of the threat of bad consequences in the event of acting otherwise – and continuing even when the threat of bad consequences has ceased' (The last two variants are substantiations of the original, very primitive thesis.).

Against these theories, the following two arguments can be put forward:

- a) The meaning of the word 'should' would change depending on the person and the time in which it was used; – alternatively, in the second interpretation: we would have no meaning for the word 'should' in the second and third person, and in the past tense. For 'you should' certainly does not mean 'you are ready (willing) to do something for fear of bad consequences if you do otherwise'. 'I should have' certainly does not mean 'I was ready', etc. Only 'you should' could be interpreted as 'I want you to...' , and 'I should have' rather as 'I regret that I did not'. The same can be said of any theory according to which 'I should' means 'I am experiencing this or that'; it does not explain 'you should', 'he should' or 'I should have'. In the second interpretation (where we talk about the fact of a sense of duty) and where the word 'should' has no proper 'meaning' but only some way 'expresses' my sense of duty – the words 'you should' and 'he should have' also remain unexplained; they mean nothing, and if they express anything, it is certainly something other than 'I should'. If one were to state what they mean or express, the mystery of duality would remain to be explained. This mystery disappears with the natural – and only natural – assumption that 'I should' means something non-psychological and the same in all persons and tenses.¹¹
- b) One of the most important laws of the philosophy of values is as follows: does 'duty' apply only to persons or also to things? Kant claimed that it applies only to persons, arguing that there can be no imperative with regard to things. This should be reversed: duty undoubtedly applies to things, and therefore duty is certainly not an imperative.

¹¹ A note in the margin: "If Peter says 'I should not' and Paul says 'you should' and they argue intellectually about the true state of affairs (and not just as two roles, about what is to be done – 'I do not want to', 'I command you to'), then of course they both understand some common meaning. Such an intellectual dispute is possible and common. Every command is a hostile act; but 'you should' can be a friendly act".

‘Tea should be hot’ is undoubtedly a meaningful statement. It is not a substitute for the statement: ‘The cook should serve hot tea’. On the contrary: it is obvious that first the tea should be hot, and then the cook should serve it hot. First comes the duty of the tea, and only then, as a consequence, the duty of the cook.

Thus, if duty applies to things, it cannot mean either a mental or a biological experience.

III. Refutation of the objection: that the duty is ready (and known) in the form of specific (and known to me) commands

The second assumption contained in the question ‘what should I do?’ was that I do not know what I should do. To this I object: yes, you do know. This objection can take two fundamental forms. The first: ‘you know because you have been told’. This assumes that someone before me has asked this question and knows the certain and definitive answer; all you have to do is ask that person, as an authority. In response, I state that, to the contrary: the dispute over these matters among those who claim to know is enormous, and the judgement remains with me. I can use the answers I find in my quest, but I cannot accept any of them on faith.¹²

The second form is more important and concerns the connection between what I ought to do and the existence of certain rules imposed on me by someone else. Again, it takes two forms. First, one can argue that ‘I ought to’ means ‘it is commanded’ by someone in some way. And one can argue that I should because it is commanded by someone and in some way.¹³

Well, first of all. Of course, there are many rules imposed on me from outside by the prevailing ethics of the society in which I live, by law and by custom. [...] But these are only external commands, which – until I confirm them internally – I obey only for the sake of peace and quiet.

¹² A note in the margin: “I do not rule out authority in axiology as a secondary and subordinate act”.

¹³ A note in the margin: “There is a third form: when you consult your ‘conscience’ directly. Here, I simply state that I do not know. My conscience advises me two things that [...] cannot be seen; some more clearly than others; besides, I am not sure where the voice of my conscience begins and ends, and where the voice of passion begins. If axiology had no other purpose than to extract and organize the content of my knowledge through conscience, it would be a great undertaking. No: my conscience definitely needs to be enlightened”.

It is necessary to give these commands normative power, adding to this fact one of the two theories mentioned.

Definitional theory: 'I should' means 'I am commanded'. Clearly contrary to the understanding of those who use both terms sincerely and without prejudice, their distinction has unfortunately been introduced by some theorists with the vague, unclear and ambiguous concept of 'norm'. This term, truly cursed, seems – although considered by many to be of the purest intention – to have been invented solely to blur the naturally understood difference between command and duty. One of the arguments against the 'transitional' theory is invalid, 'you should' is invalid, because 'you should' clearly means 'you are commanded', I should have – 'I was commanded', etc. The latter remains valid: if the duty applies to things, then 'I ought to' cannot mean 'I am commanded to'. But suppose that there is some special additional meaning in relation to persons. Then the following objection remains: – Commands can be contradictory (coming from different commanders or even from the same commander at different times). In that case, it would be so that 'I should' and 'I should not' at the same time, in the accepted definition of duty, would not be a logical contradiction, but it would leave me in complete ignorance as to how to proceed, that is, it would deprive me of complete ignorance as to how to proceed, thus depriving me of the practical meaning of duty. Therefore, 'I should' cannot simply mean 'I am commanded to'.

However, an opponent can refute this argument by responding that 'I should' does not simply mean 'I am commanded to', but 'I am commanded to by someone privileged' [who is additionally assumed not to issue two contradictory commands, although this is not a logical necessity]. Such a person could be God, and the theory then takes on a theological form: 'I ought to' means 'I am commanded by God'. Of the non-theological forms, the most ambitious is the sociological theory: 'I ought to' would mean 'I am commanded by society'.

The deciding counterargument to this concept is that duty also applies to things, and therefore where there is no conscious recipient of the command, there can be no command. Furthermore, it is permissible, and indeed a perfectly good method, to state briefly that by 'I should' I do not mean 'I am commanded'. Therefore, the second theory is common, according to which the word 'should' retains its separate meaning, and it is only claimed that I should do certain things because they are commanded to me. Of course, this may also refer to a privileged commander who does not issue two contradictory *ad hoc* orders, and does not issue two contradictory permanent (long-term) orders (regulations).

According to this theory, my duties are also defined by someone else's orders, and are therefore predetermined.

Contrary to this concept, it is quite clear that no order or regulation creates an obligation in itself, but only against the background of a certain set of relationships that creates the obligation to obey the orders of a given commander; however, this obligation to obey his orders is not, logically, the result of his order, but must precede any order he gives. However, this simple state of affairs is sometimes masked by the fact that (and this is linked to the issue of the privileged commander) the commander is so far superior to me that obeying his orders is an obvious duty in itself. This is the theological view. However, it is also the sociological view of Durkheim and his school. Durkheim repeatedly refers to the alleged overwhelming 'superiority' of society over the individual, which supposedly creates a duty to obey. It is not too much of a stretch to pose the following dilemma: either this superiority is a superiority of power (force), in which case the short answer is that there is no apparent connection between force and the duty to obey, and that not obeying force simply because it is force is the first condition for fulfilling any duty.¹⁴ Or this superiority consists in the fact that the commander knows better than I what I should do [or is better, or is himself in the service of higher values]. In all these cases, however, the reason for a possible duty is not the command, but something else that is subject to my control and assessment; – and I come back to the right of my own judgement.¹⁵

And so the question 'What ought I to do?' remains open (for thought).¹⁶

¹⁴ A note in the margin: "We submit to conscious power (human authority, the state) in the same way that we submit to unconscious power (fire, from which we flee; rain, from which we hide): to avoid harm or destruction. I obey authority just as I hide from the rain: to avoid getting wet".

¹⁵ A note in the margin: "But sociologists do not present it in such a way that society is an intellectual authority that 'knows what I should do'. It is supposed to be 'better' than me, and therefore its will would create a duty".

¹⁶ A note in the margin: "The question 'what ought I to do?' is a sensible question and there is no ready answer to it".

B. Paths to understanding value

I. The first path to understanding value: value as the justification for my duty (obligation)¹⁷

[N.b. – Regarding terminology. The word ‘*obowiazek*’ (obligation) is burdened with numerous connotations; however, I see no other Polish equivalent. ‘Duty’ is something much more general. Here, I understand it as the German *das ich soll* or *Verpflichtung* [...], *die Pflicht* and *das Sollen*. The French *obligation*. Or perhaps ‘commitment’.]

There seem to be three types of answers to the question ‘what should I do’, with increasing rationalization:

- a) The first type of answer would be to list a series of loose obligations, forming an unconnected multitude.¹⁸
- b) The second: to give one or more core duties that constitute the reason for the rest (from which the rest is derived), but which themselves remain without reason; [they are related and boil down to a few or one, then it is necessary to determine and formulate those few or one (as Kant did)].
- c) The third: they are related and flow from a source other than duty (duty is the result of something that is not duty); then one must look for that something.

The first concept is unacceptable. We think in order to bring some order and unification to the chaos of information: here we leave chaos in *crudo*. (Yes, in heteronomous ethics, e.g. à la Durkheim, this would make sense: because there, unity is in the person of the commander. Here, however, unity must be internal). There are so many different commands, and each one without any reason! The result is an excess of chaotic irrationality. However, someone, such as Prichard in *Duty and Interest*, might say that the reason for a given action, the reason why I should do it, is directly that it is such and such. For example, this action is a repayment of a favour; therefore, I should perform it. Between the properties of the action, such as those mentioned above, and the duty to perform it, there should be [...] a natural, convincing connection, which is the reason for my duty [...].

¹⁷ A note in the margin: “Theories of duty that exempt us from searching for values!”

¹⁸ A note in the margin: “Our duties have no reason or connection between them and must be determined by simple empirical calculation”.

This is precisely what utilitarians have consistently combated as bad intuitionism. Firstly, I cannot see any direct relationship between, for example, the fact that a certain act is a repayment of a favour and the necessity¹⁹ of performing it. Secondly, the intuitions of individual people vary greatly in this regard.

If different people's intuitions about a basic duty differ, confrontation and discussion are possible; here, however, we have chaos.

The second concept is sometimes attributed, not entirely correctly, to Kant. All relationships are to stem from the categorical imperative (one, although it has two secondary forms in addition to the main one); however, the categorical imperative itself is to be an imperative without reason. This interpretation is based, *inter alia*, on the famous *sic volo, sic iubeo* and is, as far as we can judge, superficial,²⁰ which is of no consequence to us.

Well, although such a lack of reason offends our intellectual needs, we would have to come to terms with it, especially since we will inevitably encounter such a lack of reason sooner or later. But if there is a possibility of pushing the boundary further and deriving a fundamental duty from something deeper than duty, then we should opt for the latter concept as it provides deeper and broader clarification.

This leaves us with the third concept. In Kant himself, according to a probably more accurate and profound interpretation, we find one form of this concept. Namely, according to this interpretation, the reason why I should do something is the universality of this duty, or more precisely, the fact that I can desire it always and everywhere. But what is the reason why something can be desired always and everywhere? Is it only consistency, as a correct deduction of specific duties from the categorical imperative would seem to indicate? Probably not. But that 'which can be desired always and everywhere' is an expression of pure will independent of nature, not subject to natural motivation, and identical with pure practical reason. As a result: 'I ought to' because I want to (meaning, that I want to?) impersonally, without motives, as a rational being. ('I ought to' here does not mean 'I want to rationally', but clearly the awareness of the pressure of our will on our emotional and sensual being.) This whole concept must be discussed later; here we need only note that the reference to universality is not definitive in it and that 'duty' has been interpreted in a way that removes its specificity [...].

¹⁹ An uncertain lesson [editor's note]

²⁰ Elzenberg's footnote: 'Its vigorous refutation in Delbos, *La philosophie* [...] *de Kant*, 2nd ed., 1926, p. 354 note'.

What remains, then, is only another variation of the third concept, the one that most closely corresponds to common sense: basing the duty of an action on what we call the value of either the action itself or what is achieved by the action [...].

The reason for my 'I should', or rather part of that reason, must be some quality of *des Gesollten*. That quality is value. And indeed, when we refer to value in justifying a duty, it satisfies us. This is the first aspect of what we call 'value' and value (that which) provides the reason for den *Gesollten*. Duty is justified by value; the concept of value is formed as the concept of something that is the source of duty; *aliter* the 'value' of axiologists contains normativity in its very concept.

To quote Laird again: '[...] we all believe that we should seek the best we can achieve precisely because it is the best. Thus, to use technical language, we believe in some ultimate synthetic relationship between value, or excellence, on the one hand, and what we ought to do... on the other'.²¹

[I am unsure whether to add the following comments here or under the section on duty: We naturally believe that value is always the source of duty. Namely: 'If something is valuable, then someone should do something. They should do something in relation to things that have the same value-giving characteristic as that thing. From the fact that a certain characteristic is value-giving, follows that someone should do something. More generally: from the fact that the value of something depends on certain conditions, follows that those conditions should be fulfilled.]

Thus, from the concept of duty emerges the concept of value. However, caution is advised: what Laird and I are writing is merely a statement of the psychological fact that invoking value satisfies common sense. However, rationally speaking, this satisfaction cannot be considered such a direct justification, because when we say, 'this is valuable', we may be saying something we do not understand. How and why does it follow that 'this should be fulfilled'? How does *Gesolltwerden* follow from value? This needs to be demonstrated. Otherwise, 'value' will be an empty word and will explain nothing (it is a verbal explanation, a pseudo-explanation).²²

²¹ J. Laird, *The Idea of Value*, Cambridge 1929.

²² A note in the margin: "The 'justification' for duty remains per ignotum or at least per ineffabile for now. Of course, the word 'value' contains some meaning that I sense, but which remains unspoken for now: the point is to extract it".

Let us note in particular that it is not at all clear how duty follows from value. The naive response would be: it is valuable, so it should be realised. But even the most cursory examination shows that not everything that is valuable should be realised by me, and that the relationship between the value of something and one's duty is much looser.

It appears, then, that the concept of value will only be useful to us to the extent that we are able to:

1) analyse it; 2) demonstrate the relationship between the value of something and my duty.

For now, we know about value only that it does indeed give satisfaction and that it should be interpreted in such a way as to justify this fact rationally, so that it becomes understandable that duty stems from value.

II. The second path to understanding value as a property of an object that creates an obligation to value that object

With awe and fear, I now embark on this path to clarify the concept of value, to discuss another aspect of it: the issues here are unclear and emotional, but they must be discussed.

In addition to the general question, 'What ought I to do?', it is appropriate to identify another question as one of the starting points (of the philosophy of value), although it is difficult to say whether it is part of the former or an additional question, namely: What ought I to respect, love, honour, etc.²³

Alongside the assumptions inherent in the first question, the following assumptions are contained here: I should or must worship something. I only don't know what. There was also an analogous assumption: you must behave in a certain way (as long as you exist).

Now I suppose that worshipping, respecting and loving are either the same necessity or an unquestionable duty [...].

It is not a necessity, because one may very well worship, love, or respect nothing at all. So it can only be a duty. A privileged duty, for, as it turns out, it is the only unquestionable one. To the first question (what ought I to do), one answer is given in any case, and it is the point of departure for a second question that arises almost simultaneously: ought I to love, worship, respect something – to what ought I to relate emotionally in a positive way? (It appears that the duty to seek one's duty is not

²³ A note in the margin: "If that question is a fundamental ethical question, then at first glance it seems to have some religious connotations".

the only a priori duty!) Where does this privilege and a priori certainty of this kind of duty come from?

This can only be explained by the presence of values in my mind. Because if, on the one hand, there is this synthetic connection between what is valuable and what I should 'do', then the same connection exists between value and duty, love, worship, respect: whatever is valuable should be loved.²⁴

[Nb.: Perhaps there is no object that possesses a property that creates a duty to respect it. But if an object possesses property X – namely, value – then I should respect it. (The property X itself – that is, value – makes every object that possesses it an object that should be respected.)]

The duty to respect value applies to every being capable of recognizing value.

What I am presenting is one marker of value. However, I reject the view of certain neo-Kantians, according to whom this is the definition of value: 'that which should be the object of such and such experiences is valuable'. This is not even part of the definition of value. (For if there were no beings to relate to it, value would remain value.)

The recognition of the indispensability of 'reverence' is therefore a fact. It is only a matter of ensuring that it is justified in individual cases, i.e. that it is directed only towards things that are truly valuable.

Value is not only the source of norms for action, but also the direct object of feelings. The concept of value is necessary in order to be able to experience these feelings in the first place, and the determination of value is necessary in order to direct them towards the right objects. It is Brentano's *richtige Liebe*.

(I must avoid the term 'approval' here, which I use in an intellectual sense: 'recognizing that it is as it should be')

Based on our intuition regarding the term 'value', we realise that the concept of value obtained in one way and the concept of value obtained in another are one and the same.

From the two chapters above, it follows that the definition of value must be such that it implies two consequences:

- a) that value creates obligations in general (or possibly the obligation to realise it, as this is unclear);
- b) that value creates an obligation to have a positive emotional attitude towards it.

²⁴ A note in the margin: "What is valuable should be the subject of such and such experiences".

These consequences will result from the definition of value only to the extent that it is itself formulated in terms of duty.

C. Analysis of the concept of value

Can the concept of value be defined, analysed or only (according to Nelson) 'more precisely specified'?

First of all, we find ourselves faced with the objection that the concept of value cannot be defined, analysed or precisely specified.

Preliminary explanations: what I mean by these things.

To define value is to replace this term with several other terms, so that the rule is fully equivalent and the terms used in the definition are in some sense clearer (more understandable) than the term "value".

'To define more precisely' means to specify any characteristic that all valuable objects possess. 'To analyse' is a common term for both.

Moore argues against the possibility of definition. Contrary to his view, it must be demonstrated that definition is possible:

- a) not in naturalistic terms;
- b) but by actually applying the concept of 'valuable'.

I. Is value a duty of being?

Let me begin with a small confession from my intellectual biography. For years, I have been carrying around this thought (hypothesis) that value can either be defined directly, simply as a 'duty to be', or, at least without making it a definition, that everything of value should be.

I also carefully collected, in the course of my reading, passages where various authors, in a more elaborate or casual manner, expressed this view (with or without the awareness of expressing a specific view) or some very similar view. The collection of these passages is quite large. It includes Sidgwick, Moore, Meinong, Simmel, Rashdall, Laird, Plato, Aristotle, Cudworth, and Rickert.²⁵

²⁵ Elzenberg's footnote: "Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed., p. 4 (cited in Laird M.W.R 41); Moore, *Principia Ethica*, translated by Znamierowski, pp. V, 16, 17; H. Rashdall, *Thesis of Good and Evil*, Laird, *The Idea of Value*, 124; Meinong, *Über emotionale Präsentation*, 118; Simmel, *Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft*, 2nd ed., p. 47. I would like to emphasize that this also concerns related views; for instance, one speaks of good, rather than of general value, or of what 'should be realised' (Simmel), rather than what simply should be".

More extensively and with full awareness it is presented in the Ethics of Nicolaus Hartmann and, finally, as a central and fundamental view on the essence of value in several articles by the American philosopher W.M. Urban (author of *Valuation* from 1909²⁶) in the Journal of Philosophy from 1916 and 1917 (especially the first article). In this way, the doctrine has its consistency, and I would not be terribly isolated if I tried to defend it. Note, indeed, that such a definition of value corresponds to the conditions. It is convincing that if something 'should be', then a being 'capable' of understanding and executing it should bring it into being: so that the justification of duty by value then becomes clear and loses its seemingly verbal character (it can no longer be accused of verbalism). It is perhaps less obvious, but also understandable in a way, that if something should be, then it deserves a positive emotional response (respect, esteem, honour) and cannot be treated as just anything in this respect. The term would therefore serve its purpose: it would bring order to our view of value and duty. Nevertheless, after careful consideration, it seems to me that it encounters insurmountable difficulties. I will briefly outline a few of them.

First of all, this does not seem to be entirely consistent with our direct intuition. Would it really convince us that every valuable thing should be?²⁷ The sense of 'duty to be' is quite naturally connected with the concept of good, but is it so naturally connected with the common concept of beauty? Would we be inclined to say that every beautiful thing should be? After all, most of the moralists mentioned above had in mind goodness rather than any value, including beauty, and sometimes treated 'value' and 'goodness' as synonyms. On the other hand, would we be inclined to say that 'there ought to be' things with a very low degree of worthiness?²⁸ I am not talking about the secondary 'duty to

²⁶ Wilbur Marshall Urban (1873–1952), author of *Valuation: Its Nature and Laws* [editor's note].

²⁷ A note in the margin: "First of all, a small methodological remark. In order to judge whether something should be, one should present oneself with a not too complete [picture] and only then ask: should this or that be? (...) Because if we have in mind the world we know and against its background we consider the 'duty of being' of something, it may often seem to us that this or that should be in it; meanwhile, this duty proves to be a derivative, mixed with the existence of some other thing, rather than a final one".

²⁸ A note in the margin: "This may be a separate point: the issue of low degrees of value. Should everything, even if only minimally valuable, exist? In practice, of course, there would be a limitation on the obligation to non-coexist with other valuable things. Namely: 'every valuable thing should exist, unless

be' (in Hartmann), which of two incompatible things belongs only to the more valuable one, but even about the primary one: can we care about something of very little value existing rather than not existing? And from here it is only a stone's throw to an objection that may not be strong, but which reaches deepest. Is it really possible to compare non-existence with existence in terms of value?²⁹ To claim that something should be valuable rather than not be anything? Non-existence eludes measurement in terms of value; there is no common measure of value for something and for 'nothing', and it is impossible to reasonably decide which should be desired: the most valuable of worlds or non-existence.³⁰

Second objection. If two things are exactly the same, and one of them is valuable and should be so, then the other should also be valuable and should be so. Hence the conclusion that, to the extent possible, there should be as many instances of one and the same valuable thing as possible, differing only in *solo numera* (If a greater number of instances of one and the same thing is possible, then they should all be).³¹

These examples could be multiplied ad infinitum.³² The ideal becomes a world quantitatively 'loaded with value'. Truth: there are people who, through a lack of reflection, understand it this way; they understand the cultural work of humanity as the accumulation of cultural goods [...]. The ideal is to 'cram' as many valuable things as possible into existence (a rather frightening quantitative understanding of culture). It stands to reason that by simply multiplying the number of valuable objects, the world approaches perfection. But we soon come to our senses when this

it prevents the existence of another, more valuable thing'. But the question of whether a given thing 'should be' must be asked in terms of a perfect world, where such alternatives caused by incompatibility do not occur".

²⁹ A note in the margin: "Non-existence is not subject to judgement; therefore, the value of non-existence cannot be compared to the value of anything".

³⁰ A note in the margin: "It sounds pessimistic, but it seems to be only an expression of intellectual criticism of the arguments discussed".

³¹ A note in the margin: "Even if we imagine [...] all-perfection, like God, we cannot claim that it should exist, because it makes no sense to claim that non-existence would be less perfect than it. (This, however, is doubtful.) And if perfection should exist? It is because it is perfection, and so it should result from perfection (value), and is not synonymous with it. The question of which alternative to choose when faced with the choice between a world that is as good as possible (perfect) or no world at all must remain unanswered. There are no reasons for this opposition".

³² A note in the margin: "If two things differ only slightly, by some minor detail, and both are valuable, then both should also exist [...]".

‘accumulation’ becomes so great that, in despair, we are ready to ask the first Huns³³ we come across to kindly clear it away.

Thirdly (this questionable argument is an extension of T.H. Green’s³⁴ well-known objection to hedonism³⁵). One can conceive of an infinite number of valuable things; all of them should exist. However, not all of them can be realised. An infinite number of things that should be will never be. Only a fraction, insignificant in comparison to infinity, will ever be realised.³⁶ Given this, one might ask: does it matter whether the insignificant fraction realised is slightly smaller or slightly larger? And if so, do we, as thinking and acting beings, have a duty to multiply? In other words, with this understanding of value, it makes sense to question whether it creates a duty, an obligation for us.

That is doubtful, though: one could argue that increasing the amount of valuable things makes sense, even though the ultimate goal is always just as distant.

Fourthly, value has degrees, therefore duty must also have degrees: one thing should be more important than another. There are only two possible outcomes.

Either one claims that the value of a simple thing has no degrees and that the alleged degrees of value of complex things consist solely in one or another balance of positive and negative values of simple elements, that duty can have degrees. Both are contrary to intuition. This would imply more generally that value cannot be a duty, that the *genus proximum* for value cannot be a duty. This non-existence of degrees in duty, and existence in value, leads to the following difficulty. A means can be valuable as a means to some end that is valuable. However, it may itself be worthless or counter-valuable. This does not contain a contradiction, because one is a value, absolute, and the other derivative, since value has degrees, so the definitive value of this means can be derived as the

³³ Un uncertain lesson [editor’s note]

³⁴ Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882), author of, e.g. *Introductions to Hume’s Treatise of Human Nature*, *Prolegomena to Ethics*.

³⁵ A note in the margin: “Green’s argument that the maximum of pleasure is not an object of desire. Here, I would say the same about the maximum of value-creating things”.

³⁶ A note in the margin: “Many valuable things will not exist at all, many will not exist forever. If we now define the quantum of value as the sum of all existing valuable things and the sum of the time it took to create them, this quantum will always be negligible compared to what it should be. Therefore, it does not seem to make sense to strive to make the quantum as large as possible”.

arithmetic mean of the two.³⁷ Meanwhile, there is an insurmountable difficulty with the duty of being, given the lack of degrees: the means 'should be' because it is a means to an end that should be, but at the same time it may happen that the same means, in itself, should not be. This creates a contradiction because the expression 'should be' means the same thing in both cases.

(Possibly also argument c, about components and parts.)

What remains of this concept is probably this: the countervalue should not be.

Conclusion: there is no obligation to be; obligation can put pressure on an already existing reality;³⁸ it does not put pressure on non-existence. Value does not desire existence. However, existence may desire (crave) value: (which is a vivid formula for the definition of value, on which we will dwell).

An inherent difficulty arises when one rejects the obligation to be. The existence or non-existence of something valuable is therefore indifferent in itself. From this, it would seem to follow that the destruction of something valuable is not evil (something that should not be). Moral consciousness says otherwise (the condemnation of Socrates, the destruction of the cathedral in Reims).

The answer. No good thing 'should be' for its own sake. However, many good things 'should be' as elements of already existing wholes, which become better thanks to their presence. The destruction of a valuable element is a change for the worse in the whole and is therefore evil.³⁹ Anyhow, the element and the whole: here we have only the main case.

If a thing was necessary or useful to make another thing valuable or more valuable, then its destruction is evil. But why do we care about elements for the sake of the whole? (What are wholes needed for?) So that the whole is as it should be. And that is the definition of value.

II. The third path to understanding value as superior to goodness and beauty. Valuable = as it should be

So if the 'duty to be' fails, we must search further; and we must continue to search for a definition that would explain value in terms of duty. (But, as it transpired recently, one that would not make value a *species* of duty.)

³⁷ A note in the margin: "? ?".

³⁸ A note in the margin: "Nothing should be".

³⁹ A note in the margin: "For the same reason their disappearance is bad".

And here we should recall another point of departure, a purely intellectual one, which we mentioned at the beginning as incidental. Incidental as a stimulus, it may prove important and decisive when it comes to outcomes. Namely, it concerns [...] the search for a superordinate concept for the two commonly used concepts of 'good' and 'beautiful'. (The philosophy of values appears here as a product⁴⁰ of the 'striving for the unification of science, in this case ethics and aesthetics')

Thus, we have the terms 'good' and "beautiful" in our language and we make statements (judgements) such as: 'this is good', 'this is beautiful'. The same applies to the terms: bad, ugly.

These sentences are somehow opposed to statements that simply state facts and constitute a separate group: they are evaluative sentences (judgements). In particular, when I say, 'This is good', 'This is beautiful', I express my approval of a given thing, I approve of it; and when I say, 'This is bad', 'This is ugly', I express my disapproval of a thing, I disapprove of it.

When we say, 'this is beautiful', just as when we say, 'this is good', our judgement contains approval. This is something that distinguishes these judgements (and possibly also judgements about holiness and some others) from all the rest. The common feature of judgements about good and beautiful, bad and ugly is approval or disapproval. What is valuable is what deserves approval (n.b. unconditional).

In both cases, these are different types of approval, but they are approvals and nothing more than approvals – and one is not more of an approval than the other. When I say, 'this is good', I no longer need to ask, 'is it beautiful?' to know whether I approve of it and to what degree, because I have already approved of it. And vice versa: when I say, 'this is beautiful', I no longer need to ask, 'is it good?' to know whether I approve of it, because I have already approved of it.

Is the second phrase equivalent to the first, does it replace and define it?

In the first case, we have the following situation: 'Every valuable thing is as it should be' on the basis that 'all things should be valuable'. Value here is just the characteristic that an object should possess, and the answer to the question 'what object is as it should be' is 'a valuable object'.⁴¹

⁴⁰ An uncertain lesson [editor's note].

⁴¹ A note in the margin: "Value and duty are independent concepts, and there is no definition of value. According to this concept, we do not want to say that valuable means having some characteristic c (other than value) that

The sentence 'A is as it should be' is, in this interpretation, a conclusion based on the premises: a) all objects should be valuable; b) A is valuable.⁴²

In conditional form: 'If A is valuable, then A is as it should be'.

(N.b. A note on the logic of sentences with the word 'should': 'All things should be valuable'. From this it undoubtedly follows that 'all valuable things are as they should be'. But I cannot for the life of me provide formal proof that the second is a consequence of the first!)

- a) Every child should be well-behaved.
- b) Every well-behaved child is as it should be.

The conclusion is unquestionable, but how can it be proved?

In general:

Every A should be B.

Every A that is B is as it should be.

Thus, by stating that 'this thing is valuable', I am not saying that 'this thing is as it should be', but only providing a premise from which (when choosing a generally understood premise, I acknowledge that all objects should be valuable) that statement is immediately inferred (in a particularly self-evident way, since it is the only conclusion that can be drawn from these two premises). Therefore, in casual speech, it is permissible to say that when one states 'A is valuable', one is also stating that it is as it should be.

This concept is hard to accept because it fails to fulfil its explanatory function.

- a) When I ask: why should all objects have qualities of value, the answer can only be because value exists. This is the ultimum. The term 'value' remains undefined and is treated as indefinable, so it is still a case of proving a point *per ignotum*: we have introduced the word 'value' as an explanation of why objects should be this way and not another, just as we previously had the word 'value' as an explanation of why something is my duty. We have made very little progress (a little in general, not in explanation), the explanation remains verbal and mysterious.

it should have. A given object should never be such and such (c, c', c', etc.) (where c would denote a characteristic other than value). An object should only be valuable. [...]".

⁴² A note in the margin: "And it should be valuable; And it is valuable; so A is as it should be. We have: a) an axiom; b) a factual judgement; c) a conclusion. Task c is a conclusion from an explicit judgement derived from an implicit assumption".

- b) Is having a value quality related to having some other 'natural' quality? If we say 'no', then it means that two objects that do not share any common qualities can both be valuable. Is that possible? If we say 'yes', then we have some characteristic on which the possession of value depends, some characteristic with which value is connected. However, this connection remains a complete mystery.⁴³ Could it be that value is not a characteristic of an object, but a characteristic of a characteristic? We find ourselves in a quandary here.

As such, this concept does not provide intellectual satisfaction. So let us try a second concept.

It will be an analytical concept. In two variants. One purely analytical: by saying that every valuable thing is as it should be, we will understand that every valuable thing can, among other things, be rightly said to have some quality *c* other than the value it should have. However, many other things can be said about it that cannot be inferred from this.

The second is a definitional one: by saying that 'every valuable thing is as it should be' we mean that each has some quality *c* other than the value it should have, and we mean either only that (i.e. that 'valuable' means 'as it should be') or, above all, that all other possible valid predicates can be derived from this predicate.⁴⁴

Well, the most favourable outcome will be if we are permitted to assume that our analytical term is a meaningful definition. It is very difficult to be certain of this, as aptly pointed out in this context⁴⁵ by L. Nelson,⁴⁶ and we should be careful to avoid the illusion that we have already given a definition when we have only discovered one of the 'attributes' that define the concept [...]. A certain check on whether we have given a definition will be found in this: we have two other "attributes" of value: 1) justification of duty, 2) the right to a positive emotional response; if these two impressions flow from the present one, we may

⁴³ A note in the margin: "The sentence, for example, 'rational order is beautiful' means here that where there is rational order, there is also a quality of beauty associated with it in some mysterious and inexplicable way".

⁴⁴ A note in the margin: "In this concept, the statement "A is valuable" means "A is as it should be"; A is *x* and A is *y*, etc. are predicates that are either unknown or known from elsewhere, but not by deduction from the predicate "is as it should be". By stating in this interpretation that "A is valuable", I am also stating (literally and without reservation) that "A is as it should be".

⁴⁵ An uncertain lesson [editor's note].

⁴⁶ Elzenberg's footnote: "Leonard Nelson, *Etische Methodenlehre*, p. 15".

assume that we have found an essential definition. (A definition is, after all, always tentative and is tested in the fires of scrutiny.)

According to this concept, we want to say that 'if A should be c and A is c, then A is valuable', where the characteristic c is some characteristic other than value.

The sentence about value is the equivalent of the following sentences:

- a) A should be c.
- b) A is c.

Value is defined by these two things: we call something 'valuable' if it should be c and that which is c.

(*Aliter*: In this interpretation, the word 'valuable' means 'as it should be', 'having the quality it should have'. This quality is something other than value itself.)

We must therefore distinguish between: 1) the quality c that an object should have; 2) the fact that the object has it.

Sensu stricto – the value of an object is only the fact that it possesses quality c. (This is the result of the definition: 'valuable' = 'as it should be', 'possessing the quality it should possess'. Value is therefore not a quality, but the possession of a certain quality [...].)

On the other hand, there is a quality which, when possessed by an object, determines its value. We can call this quality 'value-giving' (*werigehend*) or perhaps 'value-forming'. (Things are *wertvoll*, qualities are *werigehend*. One could also speak of a necessary quality – *gesollt*?) It is a property whose realisation is the ultimate goal. It is not a value, nor does it have value, but it is something supreme, from which value itself derives. It is, if one may call it that, the only 'thing' that 'exists' (is) for its own sake. Only of it can one say that it 'should be', but conditionally, insofar as something exists. (It is a natural characteristic that can be identified.)

The meaning of the term 'value' can be extended to refer to the value-giving characteristic itself. Through certain loose applications, one could refer to the value-giving characteristic itself as 'value' (of objects), and call the fact of possessing this characteristic 'valuability' (*das Wertvollsein*) or something similar. This characteristic can, in loose terms, be called 'valuable'.

The relationship between the value-giving characteristic and value is roughly the same as that between purposefulness and sphericity in a ball⁴⁷. A ball is purposefully made when it is spherical, but its sphe-

⁴⁷ A note in the margin: "The sentence 'rational order is beautiful' means here that a thing should be 'rationally ordered', understood as 'ordered, therefore beautiful' or simply that a thing should be ordered".

ricity is not its purposefulness, nor is its purposefulness its sphericity. Similarly, a stanza is valuable when it is harmonious (we assume in both cases that these are the only conditions of purposefulness or value), but this does not mean that its value is its harmony or its harmony its value. Value is the fact that the stanza has harmony.

A critical examination of this concept. Its criticism. (First of all, the definitional concept and the non-definitional concept are not one more true than the other. One may simply be more convenient and more useful than the other. In the sense that it allows for a more coherent structure of our judgements on matters of value. I assume here that our concept does not copy some objective state of affairs, but that our thinking about these things is something constructive.)

Now, one objection may be that we do not, in the end, obtain an answer to the question: 'why should something be this way or that way', and hence the question 'why ought we to do this or that' may be regarded as merely displaced. But we have seen that in a non-definitional interpretation, the answer 'because it is valuable' would remain a purely verbal answer. It is reasonable to assume that no answer is better than a verbal answer. At the same time, however, it is not irrelevant whether the reason given is that I should do it, or that it should be this way or that way. Although duty is not a command, it is subjectively felt as pressure analogous to a command, and not giving a reason for it is a return to *sic volo*. Here, however, we are dealing with a statement that the state of affairs is as we say it is, and in many cases we have to be satisfied with that.

However, this is counterbalanced by enormous advantages:

- a) the concept of value is explained;
- b) instead of a natural quality, mysteriously linked to the quality of value, we have a value-giving quality – this connection becomes logical, clear, and transparent; we no longer need to ask how the quality of value is 'linked' to quality c, because value consists precisely in possessing this quality.

Therefore, it is worth pausing at this concept. There are further benefits.

From this definition of value, two further characteristics follow quite naturally.

1. It is the source of duty: for if things can be such and such, then under the right conditions, thinking and acting beings have a duty to make them such and such.⁴⁸
2. It is quite natural that if something is as it should be, it deserves a positive emotional response, [...]

In this context, various questions arise:

- a) Could it be that destruction and extinction are not evil after all?⁴⁹
- b) What is the object of worship: value, a valuable object, or a value-giving quality? Certainly not value, which is only a fact. Either the object or the value-giving quality.
- c) It may be true that about some $A \neq$ it can be true that it should be a, b... and n. If A is now a and not b, is A valuable?

I would say that it is valuable in part. It is perfectly valuable when it has all the characteristics it should have to a complete degree. If it has all the necessary characteristics, but only to a certain degree, then it is valuable to a certain degree (not 'in part').

The *pretium* value and the *dignitas* value

This is how we have given the concept of value a clear meaning, such that someone's duties can then be derived from this concept (details of this derivation will follow later). The duty to seek one's duty thus becomes the duty to evaluate.

⁴⁸ A note in the margin: "It must be assumed that 'what is as it should be should be felt positively'. However, this judgement does not seem direct or obvious. Could holiness be defined as 'a quatenus value that should be revered'?"

⁴⁹ A note in the margin: "In theory, the destruction or extinction of a perfectly good and beautiful world is not evil. This is somewhat counterintuitive. If there were only one valuable thing in the world and it did not affect the value of others, would its destruction not be evil? One can try a definition similar to Joseph's: a particular thing cannot have value unless the whole to which it belongs has value. So the value of even one thing testifies to the value of the world. Perhaps we need to distinguish between value in general and perfect value, i.e. the ideal. Value should not 'be', while the ideal 'should'. And yet, what is partially valuable cannot be transformed into the ideal, so the destruction of something partially valuable indirectly becomes evil. And is the destruction of Socrates evil only because Socrates was part of the whole?"

Now is the time to preempt a certain misunderstanding that the term 'value' might cause.

There are people who claim that 'valuable' means something like 'being the object of desire' or 'being able to satisfy desires'⁵⁰ (from Ehrenfels to Pery) – in the latter case, value would be like the 'satiety'⁵¹ of objects. For example, 'knowledge of many languages is of great value to a scholar'. 'Value' in the sense of desirability is a value for someone in the sense of the word 'for' as in the above sentence. [...] One can also speak here of 'economic value' in a sense in which 'economic value' in the narrower sense would be a special case.

The value we have arrived at here was sometimes, rather unfortunately, referred to as perfection (which naturally has a different meaning: the highest degree), and is also referred to as dignity, respectability, exquisiteness, excellence (Laird), *Würde*, *decorum*, *egregium*, *honestum*, *καλον*.

Dignitas in Seneca is contrasted with *pretium*, *Würde* (dignity) in Meinong. I would briefly contrast the value of *dignitas* with the value of *pretium*. Economic value would then be a variation of the value of *pretium* and would not belong to axiology.

The following are therefore radically excluded: the point of view of needs, utility and the point of view of value (*dignitas*). [...].

⁵⁰ A note in the margin: "or needs".

⁵¹ A note in the margin: "the ability to satisfy needs".