

Markus Mühling / David A. Gilland / Yvonne Förster (eds.)

# Perceiving Truth and Value

Interdisciplinary Discussions on Perception  
as the Foundation of Ethics

The cover features a photograph of a landscape seen through a glass pane covered in water droplets. The background is a soft-focus scene with a blue sky at the top, a thin orange and red horizon line, and a greenish field below. The droplets are of various sizes and are scattered across the entire image, creating a textured, slightly distorted view of the scene behind them.

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Edited by Markus Mühling

in community with  
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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

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Markus Mühling

## Perceiving Truth and Value – An Introduction

Neurophenomenological, philosophical, psychiatric, and theological debates in recent years have cast doubt on the traditional subject-object distinction: Human subjectivity has been revealed to be an ecological subjectivity, the brain to be a relational organ, human becoming to be a dynamic line in a world without objects, the self to be constituted passively by the other, and perception to be conceptual from the very start. Given these conditions, does the classical distinction between primary and secondary qualities have to be abandoned? How does the perception of values like ‘good’, ‘better’, ‘true’ and ‘beautiful’ work? Does this mean that values cannot simply be ascribed by the subject as part of her cognitive-interpretative apparatus? Are values ‘in-between’?

The theme of this volume is the question of value-perception. It is discussed from different philosophical, psychiatric, theological, and anthropological perspectives. The only – very broad – thesis that unites all the papers is the recognition that we live in a relational, dynamic world, in which we primarily perceive, and that to dissolve values from facts is fundamentally misleading, both in theory as in life.

The contributions are the outcome of an energetic conference in 2016 (financed by two awards for my ‘Resonances’ and ‘Liebesgeschichte Gott’ as best monographies) where the problems at stake were rigorously discussed. The results are presented here, and they have an explicit order and are strictly related. Like most academic publications, it might not be in the shape of a dramatic story, but it nevertheless has something reminiscent of a suspenseful arc. It opens with basic questions and observations, then critical opinions and objections come into play, after which the outline of a larger theory of value perception is presented, and at the end some concrete examples from material practices are drawn. The task of this introduction is to explicate the order of discussion along the way.

At the outset, psychiatrist and phenomenological philosopher Thomas Fuchs, University of Heidelberg, opens the field with an introductory article from the perspective of philosophy in dialogue with natural science. Fuchs introduces an enactive concept of perceiving values against the backdrop of what are today frequently assumed, but contradictory models of (1) a functional naturalism about values, of (2) a realist approach that sees values as existing *a priori* and independent of natural functions, and (3) of a



subjectivist approach that regards values as a product of a person's and a community's interpretation of given, value-less facts. Against the representationalist subject-object separation, Fuchs shows that mind and life are in continuity, and that in an enactive way the real matter of the world consists of processes and relations that somehow exist in a reciprocal manner between organisms and the environment. In this dynamic relation, values exist in a realist way as predicates of these relations and processes. They are neither objective nor subjective. They are also neither cognitivist interpretations nor emotional attitudes, since the quarrel between ethical emotivism and cognitivism is revealed from the perspective of enactivism as a false alternative. Values emerge as real states of affairs from these dynamic and relational situations, as affordances, as Gibson has called it. These values are perceived as given by affective (emphasising the passive aspect) and emotional (emphasising the active aspect) means in bodily resonance between organism and environment, and between movement and perception. So far, this theory is able to explain basic or primary values like shame and joy, and values bound to drives, etc. However, the second and perhaps more important part of the theory explains intersubjective values or second-order evaluations from an enactivist perspective. Such values are the real ethical values, since they allow one to relate oneself once more to the primary values and to evaluate them as good or bad. These values, like the Golden Rule, emerge out of interpersonal relations, out of the ability to have a perspective and to understand the perspectives of others. This, however, is not a combination of functional naturalism with subjectivism, since the other person belongs to the environment of a personal organism in exactly the same sense as pre-personal processes. Like the primary values that reflect the affordances of pre-personal situations, the secondary values reflect the ethical affordances of social situations. They are realistic in the same way as the primary values and fit with humanity's eccentric position.

Philosopher Roberta de Monticelli from Milan starts by the observation that the common use of 'values' today subscribes more or less to Nietzsche's relativist use of the term without regarding it as nihilistic. The everyday problem of treating values is reflected in the discussion in meta-ethics on values as normative statements, from Hume to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as it is reflected in the thesis of the dichotomy of fact and value. Here, most are still dealing with Moore's famous analysis of the naturalistic fallacy and his thesis of the irreducibility of ethical values. The end is the double-dilemma of meta-ethics: (1) either values are non-cognitive or they are cognitive. (2) If the latter is the case, either values are reducible to natural properties, and they lose their ethical and formational force, or they are irreducible, but exist in an inaccessible realm. The usual way out of this second dilemma today is the constructivist option, a kind of vulgar-Kantianism, which claims a cognitive understanding of values without reality-claims.

From a phenomenologist perspective that always takes concrete evidence from the life-world into play, this description seems to be annoying and limiting. On the one hand, values are treated only as moral values; on the other hand, the rich varieties of values in language and experience is ignored. There is almost no situation or talk of a situation where values and their effects on our feeling is absent. If the fact-value dichotomy were true, our whole life, including harmless things like dealing with home decoration up to dealing with serious things like genocides, would become incomprehensible and ineffable. Therefore, following Wolfgang Köhler, de Monticelli rejects the fact-value distinction and claims that there is a place for value in a world of facts.

In order to give evidence for this thesis a whole elaborated axiology would be necessary. While such an elaborated axiology cannot be presented in a short article, the leading principles can. First, de Monticelli analyses the axiological qualities of a number of aesthetic phenomena, including dynamic qualities of motionless line drawings, affective qualities of landscapes, and the expressive qualities of bodily movement. Here we find values that (1) have a descriptive content, (2) have a positive and negative valence, and (3) having no conceptual criterion for their application to objects. Furthermore, these qualities are immediately perceived, not a product of a conscious process of interpretation; they are not reducible to the qualities of the atomistic parts of which the examples consist, and they cannot be attributed only to the perceiving subject, as the theory of secondary qualities would require. The second step consists in analysing the affordances, as Gibson, one of Köhler's pupils has called it, which are invitations or claims given by perceived situations to act in some way: overturned chairs ask to be set back up, musical dissonances to be resolved, beds to be made, etc. Affordances exceed the purely aesthetic, since they exemplify the oughtness of normative properties and the requirements we experience in reactions. In a last step, de Monticelli introduces moral values. All values share the feature of requiredness: whereas aesthetic values require contemplation, but not action, affordances have a functional requiredness, functional in regard of the situation at play. However, since moral values are distinguished from aesthetic values and affordances by calling to an action that either is better or worse than the value of the situation that calls us to act – which presupposes a hierarchy of moral values – these moral requirements are always a kind of second-order value. Its decisive feature, in contrast to the purely functional affordances, is the unconditionality of the requirement.

Philosopher Yvonne Förster from Lüneburg deals with the topic of values from a different angle than the two introductory articles. Instead of dealing with a meta-ethics, a theory of what values are, and how they are perceived, she deals with the formation of concrete values and the formation of moral ontologies in the face of the gaining, perhaps utopian but nevertheless powerful, influence of neuroscience's computational model, exemplified by Vidal's brainhood-

thesis, and the structural equivalent model, which claims that data-processing superstructures (like a future internet) are the determining factors of our (digital) life world. Sometimes this idea leads to the extreme post-humanist daydreams of Raymond Kurzweil and Nick Bostrom. Whereas the brainhood-model abstracts from all bodily relations and wrongly locates the mind in the brain, the cybernetic model transfers the computational model to the connections of a digital net in an internet of things. In the framework of the latter model, its proponents expect either a connected reality between humans and technology, an emergence of new qualities out of the net, or in the framework of the 'global-brain hypothesis' an emergence of a kind of superintelligence, that is no longer bound to bodiliness. Whereas the proponents of these theories claim to reach a relational or a general ecological ontology, Förster argues that this is not really the case. Instead, a reductionist thinking is still at work here, and the proponent's image of relations and the environment are rather poor. This becomes clear in Förster's first critique: although the proponents of these theories often speak about experience and the subconscious, and the techno-genetic constitution of consciousness, they do not really take experience and phenomenal perception into play. This is true first in a methodological sense: by erasing the phenomenal question, they cannot refer to what is really perceived, but they indulge in the construction of quasi-scholastic speculations. Her second critique is an ethical one: if these models become prevalent, they would lead to a picture of citizenship wherein the purely passive values of responsiveness and of subordinating oneself into structures would be preferred. Instead, Förster claims, agency and citizenship are in need of the values of active engagement. Nevertheless, though Förster is critical, she is not wholly opposed to the models she is considering. It might seem to be a little bit strange for either the theologian or philosopher to not criticize these positions from a perspective of total opposition. However, could it not be that the proponents could be more open to an empathetic critique than to an unsympathetic one?

Fuchs' and de Monticelli's articles are impressive examples of a theory of values embedded in relational and ecologic ontologies. However, Förster's article reminds us that relationality and ecology are today highly ambivalent concepts that can lead to the exact opposite of what Fuchs, de Monticelli, and a lot of theologians have in mind, since here relationality does not mean a reciprocally constitutive relationship between *relatum* and relation, but simply the ontic priority of structures, and since ecology means a highly technical environment, in which contingency is excluded. Förster's article therefore is also an important contribution to the whole theme of perceiving truth and value. It seems to be clear that we have to abandon frequently proposed lines of thinking like representationalism, reductionist functionalism, and substantialism, if we want to find the appropriate conceptual means for talking about value-facts as they are perceived in the life-world. However, it

is not enough to argue for a relational or ecological ontology instead. Nearly all the concepts describing the new framework can be instantiated by understandings that prevent exactly what this volume wants to show. The question is therefore not, ‘is there any relationality and ecology?’ in order to make it possible to conceive values in an adequate manner, but ‘which relationality, and whose ecology?’

The idea of a relational perception of value through the medium of feeling, as it is depicted in different philosophical ways in the first two contributions and problematized in the third one, can be related to theological considerations of perception and value, which emerged independently from these philosophical traditions. The task of the theologian is therefore, on the one side to show how a theory of dynamic-relational value perception can be grounded in the logic of theology, and on the other side, to show its communicability with the philosophical aspects found in the introductory essays. These tasks are faced by the following two systematic theological essays, in different ways. Whereas Stoellger’s essay first grounds the theory of value-perception in another philosophical tradition in order to show that its background is much wider than one might expect, and second shows that this can respond to genuine theological interests, such as how a Trinitarian understanding of Christology and Pneumatology can sustain ethics, Mühling’s essay tries to give a comprehensive, but circumscribed outline of a theological theory of perception and value perception in dialogue with other disciplines.

Philipp Stoellger, a theologian from the University of Heidelberg, puts the main thesis of this volume, that perception is at once an immediate perceiving of value and facts, in a broader framework. One might arrive at this through a great deal of post-analytic philosophy and the phenomenology. However, the question is by no means a new one, but an old one. Therefore, it is necessary to put the problems at stake into this broader framework.

Stoellger starts with the basic question of how the two positions – whether perception is interpreting or whether perception is in the need to be interpreted – have to be adequately related. He illustrates that this is not only a theoretical problem, but a problem that affects many ethical problems in our present life world, from old-age suicide via questions of the civic power to determine public perception up to the refugee crisis. In the first step of his analyses, he goes back to Leibniz, who argued that perceiving means always perceiving given values and meanings within the framework of his relational monadology. If everything that exists co-temporally, in the past and in the future, is internally related and ordered by a pre-established harmony, then we do not endow our perception with meaning, but receive meaning – the meaning of the whole nexus – in every single perception. The present is pregnant with the future, and here Leibniz discovered the concept of pregnancy. Is this concept meaningful apart from Leibniz’ monadological

framework? The Kantian antithesis in which meaning is a product of a synthesis presupposing the doctrine of the two stems has its own problem of showing how the conceptual synthesis can be mediated with perception. At this point, Ernst Cassirer tries to solve this problem by his theory of a pre-predicative symbolic pregnance that is given in perception and that is the heart of symbolic formation. Here, the Kantian problem of mediation does not occur anymore, since what is already a unity in perception does not need to be actively mediated. However, by referring here to Leibniz but without borrowing Leibniz' pre-established monadology, it might be true that every perception is pre-predicatively, symbolically pregnant – but what if this pre-predicative meaning was an anti-meaning? What if the symbolic pregnance was a diabolic pregnance? Cassirer cannot avoid this problem. Therefore, his theory presupposes a kind of trust in the meaningfulness and rule-guidedness of pre-predicative perception. But as pre-predicative, such a rule can neither be found by inductive nor by deductive means, but only by abduction. Whereas Cassirer claimed that such a rule has to consist of an internally related series, Husserl goes another way. In his idea of a pure or original passivity, in which something befalls an 'I' without its activity, like in the experience of time, he also sees the force of comparison to an instant, in which such a passive reception of relational meaning is given. A pre-eminent example is the fact that it befalls one to make comparisons. But it is not meaningful series, which is the condition for this, but the horizon or background of the focus, which can be different respectively to the various histories of the comparers. This theory, in comparison to Cassirer, does not presuppose a trust in positive, symbolic meaning; it can also explain the conflicting mechanisms of mercantile exchange that are in the danger of collapsing into mimetic violence. Whereas we see in Leibniz, Cassirer, and Husserl attempts in traditional philosophy, where perception is always laden with meaning, without any cognitive or active act of interpretation, Günter Abel puts the cart before the horse: He calls interpretations<sup>1</sup> that, which is passively and pre-predicatively given, which excludes any arbitrarily doubt, because doubt always presupposes the background of interpretations<sup>1</sup>. Interpretations<sup>2</sup> are the habitual, still non-conscious further formations of interpretations<sup>1</sup>, and only the level of interpretations<sup>3</sup>, the conscious level of interpreting reason, subject and object can be distinguished. Neurophilosophical traditions took up this idea and went a step further back by identifying the conditions for the possibility of these interpretations<sup>1</sup> in the unconscious, computational-constructive processers of the brain. Here we find the same problem as in Cassirer's approach: Like Cassirer who claims a conceptual series as a condition of perceiving meaning, so the neurophilosophical interpretation of Abel's interpretationalism tries to identify this series with biological and evolutionary, unconscious rules. In both cases, there is a strong kind of normativity that obviously excludes any ambiguity and metaphoricality.

Stoellger closes the analytic part with his own, preliminary and necessarily incomplete, theory. This tries to introduce a series of distinctions into pre-predicative synthetic perception: 1. The *phenomenal as*: Phenomenal appearance is basic, and therefore perception is never without interpretation, and things appear always ‘as’ this or that which is enmeshed in the context of stories. 2. Distinguished from the *phenomenal as* is the *perceptive as*: Due to its pregnancy, perception is never empty but pre-predicatively synthetic. 3. Another kind of conceptual appearance is the *deictic as*, i. e. the intentional act of showing in contrast to pure passive appearance. 4. From the *deictic as* that intends to show something as it appears, we must distinguish the *demonstrative as* or the *ostentatious as*, which intends to show something precisely as something else particular. It, therefore, implies a will to power in interpretation. 5. All kinds of appearances are mediated, and the media influences how something appears. Therefore, there is a *medial as* that indicates the specific form of medial appearing. This could be sub-classified into different kinds, such as an *iconic as*, an *auditive as*, etc. 6. The *pictorial as*, a thick form of the *iconic as*, illustrates, how in cases where one also has an explicit interpretative will to power, the media has a high, perhaps the highest, amount of interpretive power, not its users.

In order to illustrate his thesis of the pre-predicative synthesis of appearing, he concisely analyzes human dignity as a paradigm of the perception of the awareness of others. Here it becomes clear, that the pre-predicative synthesis in all its differentiations always also includes the perception of normative values. In the end, the awareness of the other provides a preservation, if not a foundation, of the alien in the sense of a *genitivus subiectivus*: it is the other – not only the divine other in a theological sense, but also generally in a hermeneutical one – that preserves the self.

The last step of his argument consists in framing perception in a Christological way. Aristotle knew that there is no *ethos* without *pathos* and that the main task of ethics is the formation and cultivation of affects by means of the poetry, which is ethically relevant. The tragic hero effects pity and compassion. Although the gospels are not tragedies, they nevertheless also tell of Jesus’ affections, they form and cultivate faith and an *ethos*. The gospels speak of the suffering of others that causes bodily pain in Jesus’ bowels, a pulling or a tearing in his stomach, in a word: phenomenally pregnant compassion. In contrast to the ancient church, the gospels give us the task to comprehend this bodily compassion ‘in the bowels’ as predicated to the whole person of the Son. They go even further, by attributing the same bodily compassion also to the Father. Bodily compassion as befalls on for the pain of others is therefore in need of being conceived primarily in a Trinitarian way. Only secondarily do the gospels transfer this bodily affect as the essence of compassion to humans, and show an *ethos* arising out of *pathos*, since perception is basically bodily openness for others in the medium of a given atmosphere. This transition from divine affects to human ones, from

Christology to ethics is grounded trinitarianly in the relationship of Father and Son, and it is effected trinitarianly, since the communication of affects to human's can be understood, with Johannes Fischer, as a work of the Spirit. It creates an atmosphere or space of bodily compassion that forces one to react in an open, but never neutral way – in a passionate, normative way: either in *phobos* or in *eleos*. This affective-axiological atmosphere is enacted by the means of effective mediums: of sacramental, i. e. self-efficacious stories like that of the Samaritan. However, such efficacious stories and images can be abused. Therefore, a *logos* that leads to reflection is necessary. However, this *logos* is not an abstract conceptual scheme that is added to the stories and images. The story of the Samaritan is used by Jesus in a critical way, too. Therefore, it is the use of effective stories and images that not only evoke *ethos* via *pathos*, but also the equiprimordially critical *logos*. The criterion for this critique is the question of whether or not a passionate story or image serves other interests, or whether it furthers its own pregnancy.

Markus Mühling, a systematic theologian from the Protestant University of Wuppertal/Bethel presents in his article, which gathers together some results of the previous articles, an outline of a theological theory of value-perception in eleven theses.

First, human becomings have to be seen as resonances of divine becoming. In both, theological and philosophical language, the notion of being needs to be replaced by the notion of becoming. God has to be understood as a Trinitarian story or a mesh of dynamic and open relations. Therefore, what is classically called the divine 'essence' is rather a mesh of whence-and-whither-becomings, of what is traditionally called hypostases or persons. As resonances of divine becoming, humans are also whence-and-whither-becomings.

Second, whereas these insights are gained through a genuinely theological epistemology, it fits fruitfully with some past and contemporary philosophical approaches and those from other disciplines. Among these are the philosophical theories presented by Fuchs, de Monticelli, and Stoellger in this volume. However, there is also a stark contrast to substantial, subjectivist, and constructivist ontologies.

Third, human whence-and-whither-becoming must be identified with the extended living body, with the *Leib*, which is an atmospheric occurrence.

Fourth, it is the storied perception of this living body that is primarily given, before all interpretative and abstracting acts of reason. But what is given here pre-predicatively can be grasped by metaphors, and metaphors have to be seen as derived from stories, not the other way around. This requires the concept of a primary story that is not a thing that is told by persons, but an emerging mesh of stories, out of which persons appear as nodes.

Fifth, in the mesh of this storied, bodily perception, the classical duality of primary and secondary qualities has to be abandoned. These so-called

secondary qualities, like the traditional qualia, belong, according to Anton F. Koch, to the objects, not to the subject. However, the distinction between subject and object becomes misleading, if it is seen as basic or as a datum instead of a methodological abstraction from what appears. In a situative context, qualia and values are observed at once and united with non-evaluative content, in an immediate way by the bodily response to affects, which are nevertheless mediated.

Sixth, values are therefore neither subjective ascriptions to seemingly value-less facts, nor social constructs, but phenomenologically they befall us. We are undergoing values, or better, value-facts or fact-values, as perception is always equiprimordially *Wahrwertnehmen* or perceiving truth and value. The universe is therefore not simply a space of facts (*Weltraum*), but a mesh of fact-values (*Weltwertraum*). To put it as boldly as possible: We suffer values, be it positive or negative ones. To the means of value-perception belong our affective abilities of feeling. Value perception by feeling is by no means neutral; it is fallible, and it can resonate with the affordances of situations in harmonic resonance or in dissonance. Whereas ordinary language frequently speaks of a ‘value-change’, a concise analysis reveals that the phenomenon denoted by this phrase – conflicting norms – presupposes an identity of the perceived moral values.

Seventh, whereas value-perception is immediate in the sense that it precedes cognitive interpretation and abstraction, it is tacitly mediated. Value-perception, therefore, is an example *par excellence* of mediated immediateness. The means of this mediation are stories, primary, i. e. emerging ones that cannot be told, as well as secondary, tellable ones. These stories form a wayformational perspective or a mode of perceiving, i. e. a perspective that is in dynamic movement and that equiprimordially forms the way and is formed by the way of becoming. Our immediate perception of values is therefore dependent on the mesh of stories we inhabit. And the question of whether our value-perception resonates the affordances of the situations harmonically or dissonantly is dependent on the question of who we become.

Eighth, theologically speaking, the question of whether our value perception resonates with the affordances of storied situations or not is the question of the dialectics of the *simul*, of being at once sinner and justified. Reformulating the promise of grace in phenomenological terms means that we are perceiving values in a resonate manner when we become incorporated into the story of the gospel. This story of the gospel resonates reality, but it does not have to be the only wayformational perspective that is able to do so. The story of the gospel neither has to be identified with the biblical mesh of stories nor with theological definitions of gospel. It is the story of the becoming of Godself. To become incorporated into the story of the gospel is not at our disposal, it is not possible through intentional choices or method-following.

Ninth, a consequence of this non-disposability to become intermeshed into the story of the gospel is that there are no positive criteria to evaluate, whether



our value-perception resonates with the affordances of situations. However, there are negative criteria, by which we can see that a harmonic resonance is impossible. These criteria can be described theologically by two criteria drawn from the Reformation doctrine of the constitution of faith: wherever bodiliness is negated, or wherever the non-disposability is negated, a resonate becoming is impossible and therefore value-perception becomes distorted.

Tenth, whereas this theological logic of sin and grace is bound to the Christian secondary story and its cultural expressions, the phenomenon described by it, the primary story, can be expressed in other ways. An excellent way to do that is Tim Ingold's description of 'wayfaring' and 'transport', and the inversion of wayfaring into transport. Another language uses the distinction of dramatic versus epic narratives, and still another the distinction of dramatic coherence versus abstract logical coherence. In the end, this means that any communication of stories that portrays human life in the conceptual terminology of the epic narrative – i. e., narratives depicting transport instead of dramatically coherent stories or stories depicting wayfaring – leads the wayformational process of our living body into a mode of becoming that is dissonant with reality. This entails the perception of value by means of feelings that do not resonate with the affordances of the situations given by the drama of the intermeshed stories in which the world consists.

Eleventh, this approach has important consequences for the whole theory of ethics and meta-ethics. Among them are the following meta-ethical ones: The basis for ethics is a storied *ethos*. An *ethos* never exists in the singular, but only as *ethe*. A theory of value perception has to be the start of an explication of ethics, followed by an explication of a theory of virtues. This has to be done in an inclusive way that does not exclude talk of norms, duties, preferences, goods, and responsibilities. Furthermore, there can be no separation between individual ethics, social ethics, environmental ethics, etc. Since there are no views from nowhere, there can be neither universal justifications for *ethe* nor for ethics. Among the ethical implications we can mention: Any attempts to invert processes of wayfaring into transport has to be seen as ethically objectionable. This includes naturalistic scientism, social constructivism, a Cartesian mind-body separation, the inversion of religious beliefs into doctrinal systems, the extension of the mercantile logic of the market to other fields of the life world, methodologism – i. e. the belief that personal formation is at a human's disposal to manage – in pedagogy and poimenics, and individualism and collectivism. These are all not only simply wrong, but to be rejected morally.

So far, the theory of value perception is clear. Whereas Fuchs has shown that value perception has a natural basis, and while de Monticelli has shown that value-perception solves problems that remain unsolvable in analytical ethics, Stoellger shows that value perception can also be grasped in broader

philosophical traditions, and that it is presupposed in a biblically based theology, including an appropriate understanding of human dignity. Mühling sums up these results through theses set in the framework of a relational-narrative ontology and theology. The decisive task is now to apply the theory of value-perception to specific material fields, to practical problems. This is done in an exemplary way by the two remaining articles. Whereas Drechsel analyses a problem from genuine pastoral practice, Ingold addresses the academic practice of science.

Wolfgang Drechsel, a practical theologian from the University of Heidelberg, starts with the observation that ‘perceiving value’ seems to be familiar for the pastoral counsellor, since ‘perceiving and accepting’ i.e. perceiving and acknowledging the perceived value of a person, is one of the most influential mottos of poimenic theory. This theory, most prominently worked out by Stollberg and Scharfenberg, promised a new immediacy that would overcome the divide between theological theory and practice. However, a second look reveals that this program is dependent on a number of theoretical presuppositions. He expresses the background of his analyses with the help of five theses:

First, tacitly, the values and ideas of groups, communities and the society form the ability to perceive particular persons on an autobiographical level.

Second, in theories of communication or counselling, these tacit ideas and values migrate into reflexive theory, mostly still tacitly, and shape the organization of the theory and its ability to pre-select what can be perceived and what is excluded, as well as the theory’s interpretative evaluations.

Third, these professional theories of communication presuppose specific models of what reality is or should be, and these direct both the theory and the practices that are carried out on its basis as normative. These models of what reality is, always contain normative ideas about the *telos* or aim of human life.

Fourth, like a grammar in language these reality models shape the practice of perceiving truth and value in professional care.

Fifth, in order to avoid a naïve immediacy and create instead a mediated immediacy in perceiving truth and value, it is necessary to introduce the third element of differentiation that has to be applied to both the one who is doing professional care as well as his communication-partner.

In analysing the pastoral care movement of the 1960s and ‘70s that adopted ‘perceiving and accepting’, Drechsel starts with the observation that this movement was developed against the older, genuinely theological understanding of pastoral care, like the dialectic theory of Thurneysen, in which human practice can at best produce free spaces for divine action. Thurneysen’s influential model was seen by the pastoral care movement as an immediate application of an ideology or theological metaphysics to practice and a return to dark ages. However, Thurneysen can also be read as taking the ideas of modernity to their most radical conclusions: by attributing autonomy

only to God, whereas humans can only realize the broken and sinful phenomena of autonomy, Thurneysen introduced a figure of differentiation that prevented him and others of the dialectical movement to become victims of totalitarian temptations. Since this highly differentiated theory implies a number of paradoxes, its direct ecclesial application in the period after the Second World War failed and ended simply in offering opportunities for prayer and short services. After the empirical turn, the pastoral care movement had the opposite idea: instead of emphasizing the difference with the world, they emphasized identification with the world. Pastoral care was no longer proclamation, but directed to the mundane needs and problems of people, and also it was claimed that a mastering of methods was necessary in order to do pastoral work. To serve human developmental abilities became its task instead of the salvation of the sinner. Whereas theology was identified with a loss of reality, the proponents of the pastoral care movement in the tradition of Rogers wanted to *perceive realistically* the concern of the conversation partner through an ethics of accepting him or her. This became the unquestioned, seeming immediate basis of pastoral care for generations. However, the hidden theoretical load is at least as high as in Thurneysen's theory: the idea of a 'prophesy by strangers' allowed for the adoption of a magnitude of different psychotherapeutic theories in order to fill the space made by the exorcism of theological anthropology. Therefore, an important method is that the pastoral caregiver must experience in his training these models which allow for an accommodation to and a congruence of perception with his or her conversation partners. And this congruence leads to appreciation and acceptance.

The therapeutic anthropology was also tacitly adopted: humans have the potential for freedom for themselves, but they are inhibited from actualizing it. The model of the relationship of doctor and patient – or of expert and client – was adopted, so that the pastoral caregiver is the means by which the perceptions are pre-structured and who, by his theory, sets the aims and norms of the conversation. The relationship between pastoral caregiver and 'client' became a hierarchical one of power, and at the same time one becomes unable to perceive a lot of situations as situations of pastoral care. Conversations in the parish as well as visiting members at home are excluded from genuine pastoral care. However, far from truly perceiving realistically, perception in the pastoral care movement is driven by a lot of beliefs, from the belief that humanity is principally good to radical constructivist beliefs and beliefs in methodology. Here the negative criterion Mühling has given – the inversion of wayfaring into transport, resp. the violation of non-disposability – can be easily applied.

However, there are also still central and influential theological decisions being made, especially Christological ones. The pastoral care movement presupposes a radical kenotic Christology of incarnation: God is visible, comprehensible, and Christ is actualized and presented in the pastoral

communication and by its methodological means. The actual conversational situation becomes sacramental, and there is no need for difference anymore. Even an immanent or actualized eschatology can be found.

Drechsel sees dramatic overloads in this conception of pastoral care, regarding methodology and regarding the abilities of the pastoral caregiver. Paradoxically this can be seen in the claim that the situation of pastoral care should have the aim to enact justification – where justification is an activity by God alone. Interestingly, during the second generation of the pastoral care movement, the idea of doing theology without theology was lost, with the result that the pre-empirical, tacit influences became much more powerful.

Whereas Thurneysen stressed differentiation, the pastoral care movement stressed identification. Obviously, an adequate theory has to deal with the question of how it is possible to bring both the Christian background – which also always entails a normative claim with regard to the perception of values – and concrete praxis together, while at the same time distinguishing them? In order to give a positive answer, some preliminary suggestions can be made: Justification can never be the task or end of a pastoral conversation, it is its condition. The pastoral caregiver has to be aware that his conversation partner is already justified by God. This, however, is not method of practice, it is an attitude that reflects a shift in the understanding of perceiving truth and value. To perceive truth and value is primarily a divine act, and every human act of perceiving truth and value is broken, but nevertheless possible under the condition of the awareness of human perceptions passively justified by God. Human perceiving of truth and value, therefore, is always in need of being justified, but also happens under the condition of the actualization of justification. The conversational situation is one among three, the pastoral caregiver, his human conversation-partner, and God. The awareness of this fact demythologizes a lot of problematic ideas. The pastoral caregiver becomes able to distinguish his own interests from the divine and from the interests of his partner. In knowing that the situation of pastoral conversation is always already sublated, the value of the conversation partner is perceived. Pastoral care is no longer restricted to quasi-therapeutic situations, but becomes an instantiation of daily practice. It is precisely the attitude of intentionlessness that enables someone to perceive the other in the light of the gospel, in a reality resonating manner. Therefore, any perceiving of the truth and value of the other is structured by the divine perspective, including in those cases where there is seemingly no ‘religious’.

Drechsel’s article can be read as an impressive analysis of how different ‘stories’ shape our mediated immediate perception, how this leads to problems of reality resonance, but also how conceiving of oneself as already incorporated into the story of the gospel can also lead to potential improvements. But telling the story in the right way is not only important for value-perceptions in practices of pastoral counselling, it is also important in the

‘purely’ scientific practices of academia. What then, is scientific work, or good scientific work?

According to Tim Ingold, a social anthropologist from the University of Aberdeen, perceiving truth and value is dependent on education, and so he asks how education, which includes teaching, research, and scholarship, should be shaped in order to provide a way of perception that resonates with reality. Although teaching, research, and scholarship cannot be isolated, Ingold concentrates on research. How can research be done in a way that it perceives truth and value in an adequate manner?

He starts with two contrary ideas of education: strong education starts with analysis and determines ends and the means to those ends. It deals with becoming human, i. e. it asks what is necessary in order to become a civilized member of society. Therein it resembles filling a pail. However, with Biesta, Ingold votes for a weak education, that does not have to do with filling a pail, but with lighting a fire. It is risky, and it does not deal with the idea of becoming human, but with human becoming. In an age where the calls for strong, functional education are loud, the need for weak education seems to be forgotten. However, it is important to stress this idea because otherwise education – and therefore a reality resonating perception of truth and value – would be lost entirely.

We can merely live life or lead life. An education that leads is not directed to solutions to problems that satisfy the immediate, functional needs of life or society, but it is a *search* about what is desirable in life. Re-search then means an iterative education that loops back at the same time as it moves forward. However, research these days is normally not so much associated with education as with data, data-collection and methodology. Whereas *datum* originally meant something that is freely given in generosity and received in the gratitude of grace, today all personal relations are erased from research by objectivity. A datum has become in the model of ‘hard’ science something that is not received, but that is taken by methodologies and experiments against obstacles, and successful hard sciences make ‘impacts’. If personal relations are not restlessly excluded by methodology, science becomes ‘soft’ science, i. e. a science that bends in the face of its field of study. Whereas ‘soft’ science is usually a pejorative term, Ingold shows that a bending of science in the face of its subject-matters is necessary, it leads to a mutual process of things and persons, to a correspondence.

Correspondence is akin to a craft that shapes our attentional abilities and that opens our perception to what is going on, so that we become able to respond. It is not driven by violence or deception, but by the hope that when we attend to things and persons, they will respond to us. As such, it is a matter of love. However, today sciences that are built on correspondence instead of methodology, like Goethe’s understanding of science, are discredited. The hardening of science we observed in the last decades is an effect of the

mercantilization of science in the framework of a global economy, and it is expressed in the relentless competition for innovation and excellence. Thereby, by its robust methodologies, scientists have lost the phenomena they study and they are on the way to getting lost in virtual worlds. But as robust as a methodology might be constructed, it is not able to separate science entirely from its embeddedness in the real world. Practically, scientists also are immersed into a sentient world.

Friedrich August Kekulé understood science as a kind of wayfaring or pathfinding that accepts what the world has to offer. Science has to become attuned to its diverse materials, and it has to become an art that is both personal and charged with feeling. Hereby experience and imagination are merged. Only where science and art merge, a pursuit of truth is possible. The pursuit of truth is not to be confused with the pursuit of objectivity. The latter one is not a royal road to truth, it blocks its way. Whereas objectivity wants to tie off the relation from the world, truth presupposes full participation. Research as a relation of mutual indebtedness entails curiosity and care. It entails curiosity precisely because it cares, not the other way around.

Research, therefore, is ‘the pursuit of truth through the practices of curiosity and care’ which are two sides of the same coin. Although the concepts and understandings of truth vary from field to field and from discipline to discipline, what they have in common is that this pursuit is open: The search for truth does not mean hoping to get final answers, but to search again if one thinks one has found an answer. Literally, ‘search again and again’ is the meaning of ‘research’. With this feature, research is a guarantee that life can go on, and therefore we are committed to research. Of course, the present *opinio communis* tells a different story: it tells the story of research in the model of a game, with rules and the terms of success in the shape of measurability, which is derived from the neoliberal economy of knowledge that has corrupted the meaning of research.

Many parts of research of the academic world do not seem to be wholly functionalized, but driven by curiosity. It is called ‘blue sky’ research, and its practical effects might become visible only decades or centuries later. Nevertheless, this view is a sign that curiosity is divorced from care. Research that is not ‘blue sky’ is labelled as ‘practice led’ or as ‘applied’ and ‘creative’. Therein, it is said, it produces results that can be sold to others for application, without care. However, real problems always exceed their solutions and are never dissolved by them. In the pursuit of truth, research is more about the discovery of questions in practice. And the emergence of questions always outpace preliminary answers found during the way. Therefore, in this sense, true research can neither be ‘practice-led’ nor ‘problem-oriented’, since ‘care, not impact, is the hallmark of the ethically responsible search for truth.’

Ingold’s answer to the question of what scientific research can meaningfully be might cause a number of further questions: Does science need to become art?

What then are the differences between the two? Is there still a distinction between perceiving truth and perceiving value? Is Ingold's essay really about academic science? Or is it more an essay about perceiving truth and value along the way of life itself?

We leave the searching for answers and the discovery of new questions to the reader. The ideas of perceiving in a story that does not dissolve truth and value, of being immersed into a perceivable, dynamic and relational world, are of course not new. And the differences among the positions of the different contributors should not to be underestimated. However, we hope that we have shown that it is important in what story we conceive ourselves as living and becoming, and that considerations like those presented in this book have to be considered if one wants to perceive truth and value.

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*Barmen, February 2019*

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## Values as Relational Phenomena – A Sketch of an Enactive Theory of Value

### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The emergence of the concept of value in philosophical thought since the 19<sup>th</sup> century is not least to be seen as a reaction to the loss of metaphysical certainties, which was increasingly experienced as disconcerting and destabilizing. It was Hermann Lotze in particular who developed an objective doctrine of value from a concept taken from political economy, which ascribed a special mode to values, namely, their *validity* (*Geltung*). Scheler's later phenomenological theory of values can also be understood as a critical examination of Nietzsche's relativistic 'transvaluation of values', against which Scheler set the independent realm of material value qualities and their *a priori* ethics. Since that time, the concept of value has swayed back and forth between an exclusively subjective preference and an objective notion of validity which is even potentially invariant across cultures or times.

The goal of the following deliberations is to attain an independent point of view in contrast to this polarity, from which it is then possible to determine the status of values anew. I will employ the recently developed concept of enactivism<sup>2</sup>, according to which the processes of perception, cognition and emotion are essentially conceived as *interactions of a living organism with its environment*. As we shall see, this will lead to a relational and processual conception of value: values are understood neither as purely subjective preferences nor as objective fixed entities, but rather as forms of affective significance, which result from the perceptual and acting relationship living things have with their environment. Values, in other words, are qualities of the interactions and relationships between a subject and the world.

In the following I will briefly sketch and critique three primary positions on the status of values that are current today, in order then to develop an enactive conception of values against this backdrop. The questions leading the investigation are

1 Translated by David Andrew Gilland.

2 VARELA, F.J., THOMPSON, E., ROSCH, E., *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*; DI PAOLO, E.A., *Autopoiesis, Adaptivity, Teleology, Agency*; THOMPSON, E., *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*; STEWART, J., GAPENNE, O., DI PAOLO, E. (ED.), *Enaction: Towards a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science*, 361–385.



- (1) How do we experience values and how do we perceive them?
- (2) What ontological status do values have, and how can their validity be established?

These questions are not new, but they are increasingly gaining poignancy given our globalized world with its intercultural encounters and controversies. What is the basis for various understandings of value? Are there universal values, or are values relative to culture or only dependent on individual preferences?

## 2. Basic Theories of Value

In contemporary axiological and meta-ethical debates three basic positions are apparent, given a certain amount of simplification: (1) a naturalistic, (2) a realistic, and (3) a subjectivist position.<sup>3</sup> These will first be presented in brief, each with a critical evaluation. The following presentation does not claim to be an exhaustive analysis, but rather serves in the first instance as form of demarcation over-against the enactive position to be developed later on.

### *(1) Naturalism: Values as biological-functional advantages for survival*

Naturalistic theories of morals and values, as advocated by Robert Boyd<sup>4</sup>, Phillip Kitcher<sup>5</sup> or Richard Dawkins<sup>6</sup>, have attained increasing significance in recent decades. According to these theories, human needs and interests but also moral orientations are guided by how they provide survival advantage for the biological core group. Thus, love for children serves the goal of successfully rearing children, nephews and nieces, and ultimately the principle of the preservation of one's own genetic line. The same thing even goes for ethical attitudes such as altruism: its functionality consists in the preservation and propagation of the genes of one's own genealogical line and therefore belongs to our genetic endowment. Even general social-ethical value orientations ultimately result from evolutionary adaptive advantages, thus from the biological nature of humanity.

The problem of the naturalistic fallacy underlies such sociobiological explanations of morality, that is, when an ethical 'ought' is derived from a biological 'is'.<sup>7</sup> Biologically speaking, however, it is only possible to explain the

3 See also KUTSCHERA, F. v., *Grundlagen der Ethik*.

4 BOYD, R., RICHEKSON, P.J., *Culture and the Evolutionary Process*.

5 KITCHER, P., *The Ethical Project*.

6 DAWKINS, R., *The Selfish Gene*.

7 On this, see GRÄFRATH, B., *Evolutionäre Ethik? Philosophische Programme, Probleme und Perspektiven der Soziobiologie*, 77 ff.

primary values for survival of the individual or one's own group, not the overarching moral orientations, which go beyond one's own interests.<sup>8</sup> Humans, however, via reflexivity and freedom can position themselves with respect to their primary biological needs. This means the values orientating their action no longer only serve the mere preservation of life, but rather *the good life*; they therefore need an overarching justification.<sup>9</sup> Charles Taylor formulated a critique along these lines:

'Naturalism [...] believes that it can cope with the life-related values – survival, flourishing as a living being, including health, strength, energy, the desires which de facto accompany life, for sex, food, (in certain cases) dominance. I shall call these the L-values. But it cannot see how values of an incommensurably higher range can have a place in post-Galilean nature.'<sup>10</sup>

A functionalistic explanation of values is also not capable of explaining why humans are even ready to sacrifice their primary 'L-values' in favor of higher values, say risking their lives for the goal of freedom. Moreover, insight in overarching values such as that of human dignity, generally implies universal moral attitudes, which no longer correspond to any primary personal or group interest, such as the rejection of slavery. On the other hand, there are actions, which at least to a high amount do result from the biological nature of humanity and are nevertheless considered to be objectionable. This would apply, for example, to xenophobia: although from a socio-biological standpoint it presents an evolutionarily selected and frequently encountered defensiveness against unfamiliar groups, it is not to be evaluated as morally good *per se*. The question of the foundation and validation of values is therefore to be sharply distinguished from that of their genesis: we make moral or value judgments from an overarching perspective, from the viewpoint of the 'generalized other' (Mead<sup>11</sup>), and not because biological selection has implanted this value into us as an adaptive advantage.<sup>12</sup>

8 ILLIES, C., Philosophische Anthropologie im biologischen Zeitalter. Zur Konvergenz von Moral und Natur.

9 Here we have to refer to the Aristotelian tradition, which is taken up, for example, by NUSSBAUM, M., The fragility of goodness: luck and ethics in Greek tragedy and philosophy.

10 TAYLOR, C., McDowell on value and knowledge, 245.

11 MEAD, G.H., Mind, self, and society.

12 The distinction of genesis and validity (*Genesis und Geltung*) is derived in particular from Kant who in his 'Critique of pure judgment' formulates it as the question of '*Quid facti?*' versus '*Quid juris?*', regarding the concepts of understanding (KdrV A84). – On the genesis and validity of moral norms and values, see GETHMANN, C. F., *Genesis und Geltung von Normen*.