

ACTION AND CREATION OF THE WORLD

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ABSTRACT: In this essay I will present a basically new theory of value. I arrived at this theory over the course of a long period because of my growing conviction that psychological analyses of value in philosophy and the literature of value actually had little or nothing to do with value. At most the psychological factors and motives may be one, and only one condition of valuation, a prelude to value, and only in the human agent. Values are also independent of the metaphysics of substance and attribute, of subject and object, and of any other metaphysical commitments. The argument is that value is tied to action and action continually interacts with the world to create a novel world.

Keywords: action/actualization, creation/creative, meaning, teleology, value, world

1. Introduction

In this essay I will present a basically new theory of value.¹ I arrived at this theory over the course of a long period because of my growing conviction that, despite many subtle psychological analyses of value that had been set forth in philosophy and the literature of value, these approaches actually had little or nothing to do with value. At most the psychological factors and motives may be one, and only one condition of valuation, a prelude to value, and only in the human agent. Usually, even if or where they are a prelude to value, they contribute nothing and tell us nothing about value except, perhaps, the relentless egoism of Western philosophy and culture. Value theory, I am persuaded, should be free of “psychologizing,” just as logic was liberated from it about a century ago and on similar grounds. Values are also independent of the metaphysics of substance and

¹ Although novel, the theory of value as creative actualization is closely related to Dewey’s notion that value involves “bringing about,” and thereby changing the future. Dewey emphasized “bringing about” but he did not present a theory of value as bringing about; this was one element in his complex theory. My theory focuses on a similar notion and thus I can claim it is basically new.

attribute, of subject and object, and of any other metaphysical commitments. However, this paper will concentrate on creative actualization as a value theory as such. The argument is that value is tied to action and action continually interacts with the world to create a novel world.

I will expand upon these points and try to justify them in the course of the article. I will first bring in the elements involved in creative actualization such as teleology, action, and meaning.² Since creative actualization is the creative actualization of goods in the world, “world” as an element of this activity will be discussed next. Since the end of creative actualization of goods is improvement in some sense, the amelioration involved in changing the world through creative actualization of goods will be examined.

2. Action, *telos*, Meaning

Values are pursued in time as ends and manifested by acts. There is a close relation between action, ends, and value, which is worth exploring. The relation of action, *telos*, and value to meaning will gradually unfold also. The argument will be made that *telos* identifies the act as aiming at some end; values differentiate the act by finalizing it and thus giving the act finitude so that other activities can be taken up: new acts. The act is completed when worth is actualized or achieved. The endless stream of activities is thereby differentiated. The world is improved by the birth of new or additional goods, meliorism.³ Value is achieved over time, at different times, through an historical accumulation of goods. Thus values are not merely an analytic element: values can be singular as temporal, especially in personal valuation. However, the value problem is distinct from quantity.

² A precis of Creative Actualization as a theory of value was presented in my article, “Toward a Deontological Environmental Ethic,” published in *Environmental Ethics*, Spring 2001.

³ Meliorism is one thing all the pragmatists share. William James contrasted meliorism with cosmic pessimism (e.g. Schopenhauer) and optimism (e.g. Leibniz). James argued that although the world is not perfect, “the best of all possible worlds,” that he thought it could be improved. Meliorism, then, is the belief that we can improve the world, make a bad situation better and the like.

Indeed, one act can be distinguished from another by the worth achieved.

Action is not blind: in acting an agent must not only deal with the actual world, but with value. Acting is a complex of acting in the world, hopefully with skill, improving the situation and doing so while preserving oneself as an actor. Action, following Plato and Aristotle, can be the instrument of some further good or performed for its own sake, a means or an end. This relation of means to ends has a very similar counterpart in every system of philosophy and is thereby independent of the metaphysics of substance and attribute, of subject and object, "process," and of any other metaphysical commitments. The relation of means to ends remains the same even when the metaphysics changes.

Action actualizes goods, that is, action is included in the root of actualization as the means, cause, and agency of creative actualization. Values may motivate our action, but they are also the result or accompaniment of successful action. They are manifested, actualized by and through action. Goods acquire value only through human action. They are pursued, made, improved or acquired, resulting in actual changes in the world: action is the agency of change. Actions bring about situations different from those prior to when the action commenced.

Actions are not independent of value. Creative actualization as a theory of values is a theory in which values limit actions and thereby make actions finite. Creative actualization is the successful achievement of the action and thus finalizes the action. The achievement of the result ends the action and finishes it when good is achieved. By finishing, they end them, which constitutes and marks them off as actions, different from mere coming to be. By ending them, values give actions a purpose. Values thereby make actions possible: they define action. By limiting actions, values differentiate them from one another. Each act is limited and thus distinct from another action: different from one another. We may then define creative actualization as the creation of

new goods over time, through action, making goods actual that were only potential goods before.

Values limit value to finitude and thereby separate action from becoming.⁴ Our activities are not tied to an endless coming-to-be but end as results or consequences that are improvements. A painter does not work on one canvas forever. When something of value is achieved, the painter generally begins the next painting. The painting or most other actualizations can be improved with minor adjustments, but there comes a point at which the end, the goal, has been achieved. The value is actualized and the action ends. Similarly, a building is completed, a project is completed, and an order to a factory is filled. In religion a ceremony is brought to an end. In science an experiment is completed. A medical treatment is successful; the disease is cured and does not linger. The actions and activities have accomplished something of value. We are then justified in ending the action by its having achieved a good. The "end" is marked by the emergence of some good. Since it is novel in some sense, it involves creativity, the other element in creative actualization. By limiting action, value differentiates, just as the action, in a reciprocal relation, is the agency of creative actualization of the value.

In the context of action, creative actualization constitutes an answer to George E. Moore's famous question about good. In answer to Moore's question, "but is it good?" or "is it valuable, does it have value?" creative actualization ends action by the achievement of good. Value is fully actualized as inherent. No further good can be actualized as *this* good, as this good is actualized and childlike repetition of the question is redundant. The end of a successful action is a practical end to a theoretical infinite. If the action falls short of the goal, good has not been achieved. But good in relation to other goods can be evaluated. This question is one for evaluation, especially moral evaluation and environmental ethics.⁵

⁴ Cf. Hannah Arendt on the distinction of work and labor in *The Human Condition*. Work creates goods while labor is tied to becoming, the cycles of nature, in her view.

⁵ I have argued in my book *Environmental Philosophy: A Revalu-*

Should we continue to make plastics? Use atomic energy? Is it worth it? However, evaluation is distinct from any theory of value tied to action.

3. Creative Actualization and the World

Although value finalizes action, value as the cause of action is not final in one sense: it does not bring all action to an end, only one action. By limiting action values make other actions feasible. One comes to an end so another can begin: we can commence new actions. We can evaluate and choose what our next action will be undetermined by finished, completed projects. The world is thus improvable still in the continued possibility of more and better creative actualizations. The world is not in a finished or perfected state. Actions make our world possible: the world is not the flux of becoming or the endless cycle of biology and life. Making a world means a better world is possible. Improvement is the enemy of perfection. Evaluation of what would constitute improvement is ever destructive of the "given." What is "given" to perception are past evaluations of improvement, of successful creative actualizations.

Values limit activities by differentiating them.⁶ Values bring actions to an end so that they are not endless and thereby futile (Sisyphus). By achieving something of value, action is given its meaning, purpose, and justification, differentiating the worthwhile from the futile. The action is worthwhile, for it is not ceaseless and blind but definite and melioristic. Actual improvement results unless we later discover the action was a "waste of time," "useless," "no good," and so on. In turn, action gives actuality to values. If action is justified by values,

ation of Cosmopolitan Ethics from an Ecocentric Standpoint, that the distinction of environmental ethics from ethics is untenable. Environmental ethics is the ethics of the future, since our decisions as humans are both within the environment and affect that environment. The environment is a larger whole than the merely human and thus human ethics is only a subset of environmental ethics.

⁶ Again, values are the most general term of difference, as they give limits and meaning to actions that differentiate them. However, identity and difference are correlative, as an identity differentiates it from any other identity. Thus the problematic of identity and difference is of limited value.

values are actualized by activity. Thus action is tied to value: they are mutually connected.

If actions manifest values with creative actualization, can values also be the ground of action? Don't actions as cause "effect" creative actualization? I argued above that values constitute actions and separate them from mere becoming. Values also ground actions by bringing them to an end and so giving them purpose and meaning. Actions are thereby grounded in the world, since the world is made better. Not a lack, a desire, but a valued goal stirs us to action, for a lack is only perceived as such in terms of betterment and a world that can be improved. The goal of improving the world and ourselves stirs action. Value as creative actualization is the source of qualitative changes in the world, of genuine novelties and differences. Change is not a coming to be for creative actualization means that novelties are created by action. The world is indeterminate, for it is modifiable.⁷ Values are the ultimate grounds behind actions. They are its sufficient ground for they constitute action and give it meaning. Ironically, due to the double direction of teleology, they are embodied through action. A successful action entails its good; it completes or brings about the value it aims at: its ground. Thus, the relation is not a *pros hen*, a referring back to a justifying first, since value is creatively actualized as ground and consequent. Action is constituted and a necessary part of this process. (Also, values may not be the ostensive "reason" or motive. A person may work to "earn a living." We may judge that "earning a living" requires no justification since in our culture its value is obvious and does not need stating: it is implicit in the "reason" or motive. Or earning a living is of value of itself or superior to alternatives, starving, welfare, living off of relatives, and so on.)

⁷ This topic is addressed in my book *Speculative Evaluations, Essays on a Pluralistic Universe*. Change is not a variation on becoming for creative actualization, that is, within a paradigm of beings. Nor is change an "eternal recurrence of the same." Nothing can be eternal in principle that is subject to human actions. Indeed, genuine novelties and differences arose before humans: cf. Henri Bergson's book *Creative Evolution*.

If value grounds action, how can instrumental values have value? Value as “that which is pursued” covers only end value, not means. Instruments have inherent value, as Clarence I. Lewis first pointed out, as instruments. An instrument such as a tool has proven worth, as it is useful for the creative actualization of something else in a reciprocal relation. The means are justified and grounded in the end, but the ends require the means. Also, as Dewey pointed out, ends can later become means and vice versa. Making a tool is a goal, an end. Creative actualization of a tool, if successful, achieves value as a good. Means and ends are fluid and reciprocal. Moreover, the instrumental value is itself a creative actualization: the tool was creatively actualized at some point in the past but not ultimately for its own sake. Inherent value as a tool is not intrinsic value. The creation of tools and other instruments is novel, and a historical achievement grounded in world. The instrument has value but as an instrument in a relation.

This creative actualization is a general principle, that is, it can be successfully repeated: recreatively actualized. Thus norms, principles, and other “generals” can be manifested by action. A good of its kind is actual as an instance and creatively actualized by action. Action produces instances of the norm but recreation in the world produces further instances. Action thus mediates norms and world by creatively actualizing norms in the world so that they “function as they should.” “Oughts” become “is” or in our terms, actual, since their duration is finite and variable. The distinction of “ought” from the actual is merely theoretical and abstract, since practice is frequently the creative actualization of norms and principles. Action attenuates the distinction and creatively makes an “ought” actual.

A relative improvement can be gauged, distinguishing action from becoming. A painting may not be perfect nor make life bearable, but is inherently valuable by itself, for it is better than no painting. The new painting is melioristic, marking a relative, not an absolute improvement by making the world a better place, even if only slightly. Values are pursued as grounds of acting

since they are superior. Their actualization is superior to the present situation. Creative actualization must somehow produce a superior world, or the action would not be made into a project. Actions must demonstrate the value of evaluations by first grounding them in the world, creative actualization, and thus demonstrating their superiority over the past. Evaluations are judgments of potential value; their actual value is subject to subsequent critical reevaluation of their success. Actions are guided by value but have their own mode of inherent value as the general means of bringing the potentially valuable to world as creatively actualized. The goals of action are to achieve something worthwhile and meaningful in the world, overcoming futile becoming. A basis in the world is not in need of a further ground, as it is in the world as a good, self-grounded, inherently valuable.

Values are often in the realm of time and space, since they are creatively actualized over time through actions that take place in a space. They are concerned more primarily with the actions that creatively actualize, not the goods that are the product of creative actualization. Thus, values are often bound up with goals or principles regulating future acts, not descriptions of present goods, although they can refer to the latter also, since goods continue or remain as the act of creative actualization. Good is achieved over time, at different times in a historical, pragmatic accumulation. Value is revealed over time, and thus is not a priori or transcendent. Creative actualization is an immanent theory of values.

Good is frequently cumulative and therefore neither permanent nor an endless cycle. Value may come to an end (the beauty of the Parthenon, or the Colossus of Rhodes). Such goods must be replaced or are superseded. Time may also play a part in differences in value. What is adjudged scrap at one time may be a vital component in a broken machine at another. Further, we can have different virtues and exercise different talents because the same kind of value can be actualized at different times by different actions. Since action is completely bound up and constituted by values, creative actualization is historical. However, such action is not

tied to the endless flux of becoming, since time is utilized for improvement and change. Time is constituted as historical. The “ontological” problematic is superseded in the use of time for improvement. Values differentiate and give worth to moments as distinctive. The temporal flow is not similar to endless others—becoming—have an end or limit created by actualization of the goal.

4. Teleological Grounding

The relation of action, *telos* and value has many different aspects: value is multi-dimensional. Firstly, there is the dimension of space and time: the locus and historical context of creative actualization. An end lies in the future and is actualized over time in a place through action. Another is quantity: that an act is a unity with its end and creatively actualizes a value as a good. Another is quality, which distinguishes the worth of an act. Quality is actualized as an end of the act. There is the causal dimension, the causing of a new good in the world as result. An act has a cause, which is its sufficient ground, thus the end as a cause or ground is presumed. However, the end is also a result or consequence. There is the dimension of the relation of the possible to the actual and the extent to which what is actualized manifests the possible. Further, does actualization of instances manifest general values, norms, and principles? Value comes in different modes. There is the worth of ends as justification of the pursuit of an end in action. For who would pursue worthless ends? The good an act aims at is a distinct aspect from the end as result.

Values are pursued as ends. As I argued above, bringing an action or activity to an end, limiting action to a finite goal allows for other goods: other activities. Limiting action is the cause of more goods and different kinds of good. Further, teleology as an end is actualized in the world. The end as result is separated from mere subjectivity—from mere whim, wish, desire or feeling—by its creative actualization. The goal of action in the world is to creatively actualize this goal as actual: as a part of the world. The result is actual creation of a good,

not a thought of a possible one. Achievement of the goal separates the actual from the possible. Technology is not the result of such psychological factors: not a matter of feeling, desire or will. The goods that are made are in the world and their good is part of the world. Norms as “oughts” are similarly creatively actualized. “*Telos*” is involved in aiming at bringing something into the world.⁸

Value, however, is the ground of *telos* and action. If value is the cause or ground of action, how can it at the same time be the result or effect of action? Aiming at the goal or purpose begins action but achieving the end is the consequence or result. This distinction is not always clearly drawn but is significant because of the time relations it allows. Value grounds both at the beginning of an action and at the end, when a good or value is creatively actualized. The paradox of ends is that they are a first or beginning as the ground of action, since a ground precedes a consequent.⁹ Then the end is actualized creatively as result and the action comes to an end as completed. The paradox is that an end is both a cause or ground of action, and its consequence, when the goal is creatively actualized as a result, a good. Thus, value limits by ending the whole sequence as the ground. Value is the “ground” as the goal in the world, which becomes grounded through or by creative actualization. Value has its beginnings or first in its ends. Unless a goal is creatively actualized, the attempt is “no good.” Thus the “state of affairs” that is created is the consequent of its creative actualization:¹⁰ value is the ground of action that creates new actualities as a consequence. To crea-

⁸ I am following Aristotle, for whom the end is equated with the good (N.E., I, 1 et al.). Cf. also *Meta.* I, II and XII (partly quoted above); and *Physics* II, 7 for his account of the good as the end. *Telos* has several aspects that are disguised by the unity of the concept. Firstly, *telos* is both end or goal and also good. Secondly, Aristotle does not carefully distinguish end as goal and end as result or consequence.

⁹ This paradox was recognized by John Stuart. Mill.

¹⁰ Thus value can only be an “attribute” of a “state of affairs” as a consequence: value is the ground of the “state of affairs.” Value constitutes a “state of affairs” in a historical sequence: creation of a new, better state of affairs. This presumes, of course, that we acknowledge and give credence to “states of affairs.” The latter is subject to critical evaluation, since “states of affairs” is a clumsy way of saying “actual” that, like “thing” and “object” ignores the genesis of the actual in creative actualization.

tively actualize is to ground in world as a discrete, autonomous instance. The goal is actualized in an inherent instance of a good, which is successfully created in the world. The good differentiates the goal as a successful one that is actualized, thus grounded in the world.

As the ground, evaluated worth pursuing, values are potential good; as creative actualizations, values. There is no value without creative actualization. As I noted above, the point and locus of such a creative actualization is the emergence of a new, distinct good, which is separable in the abstract from ends, actions, even good, although creative actualization lingers as a good.¹¹ However, creative actualization is also the consequence of acting for the end that is creatively actualized. Thus, if the ground coincides with the result, the achievement of value is successful. In this sense ground is actualized differentiation. By creatively actualizing we have created actual grounds for possibilities, that is, grounds for their actualization. They are not merely of potential value but of proven worth. They are actualized in the world: they are not a dream, a hallucination, a desire or wish. The value of a possibility is actualized in creative actualization. Value ends or concludes activity with actual goods in the world, which remain in the world. Value continues grounding thus continues goodness or what is valuable. Value as creative actualization is reliable.

Values both justify and ground ends since we finish or complete an action when the worthwhile goal has been achieved. Creative actualization grounds by bringing action to an end when the goal is achieved. Our ground in the future, our aim has resulted in an end. We are justified in stopping an activity by the value that has resulted, the good that has been achieved. In sum, value as the ground is the evaluation of worthwhile possible goals and actions as means to them. Value is the creative actualization of such possibilities whose result ends the action. The possible value is then grounded in world as actual: the possible is creatively actualized. Value also

justifies the whole process as its ultimate ground, differentiating the worthwhile as actual. Distinct goods and values are creatively actualized, changing the world for the better. Values justify as the grounds of teleological action.

Values are the “invisible movers” (Friedrich Nietzsche) as they give action and its goals a focus and significance even before they “appear.” They are both regulative over acts and made: they make history possible, but are in turn creations of history. An art becomes performed through the significance given to it by evaluation. A person writes a phrase of music, cooks a certain meal, marries a special person, and even picks up an attractive shell along the beach as acts of value. Each act focuses on a determinate and particular end instead of some other end due to value. Just what ends up proving worthwhile differs in time, which allows different actions, and in quality and kind. Such differences are values in the sense of the most general term of differentiation.

Values differentiate goals as singular ends. Knowledge, wealth, art, and other, plural goods can be pursued, aiming at different goods. The goal pursued is a worthwhile one, differentiated as worthwhile. Value is the determinate differentiation of goals in general. Values differentiate goals. In turn, values are discovered through teleological action. Experiment, practice, work and other activities reveal the actuality of new goods. The possibility of such discoveries in turn generates new actions stimulated by new goals in historical accumulation. By differentiating goals, various different goals can be related as mutually feasible.

Values mediate means and ends,¹² harmonize the possible and the actual. If a good end is evaluated as worthwhile pursuing, the action used as its means of creative actualization is well performed and the goal is achieved as a consequence. As singularly actualized, the

¹¹ Value is not identical with a good, however, since value is sometimes achieved in different modes, for example, musical notes that are hit correctly but do not linger.

¹² That is, imagination and action. Cf. “thirds” in Charles S. Peirce. However, as I note below, values are ultimately a differentiation as instantiation, so are not mere “generals.” Ends are instances of generals, which gives axiology its “logy” element.

good is distinctive, not merely an instance of a principle. This good is distinguished as distinctive: a good. Thus, the end has a “real” basis in the world; it is grounded as creatively actualized. Values, as regulative of ends, have no actuality prior to their actualization as an end. The goodness or worth of ends gives value to the world, but their separate “existence” apart from value would be worthless. Value, in the form of evaluation of potential value, regulates by differentiating which ends are creatively actualized. They are differentiated by creative actualization in world: they are put into practice. The world is thereby changed for the better, if only slightly.

Evaluation, then, is in part normative. Norms are actualized as ends and this includes principled action. “Oughts” as a species of norm are also the ends of action: they involve acting for the future if they are evaluated worthwhile and are not impractical. Oughts are also creatively actualized as a goal over time and in a place as a project. Genuine oughts as a species of norm predict what will be but is not, unless an ought coincides with the actual already, for example, bravery as a trait of an individual’s character. If we ought to do something we will, and this creative actualization of the ought “confirms” it.

Values as creatively actualized ends always involve temporality for achievement. Ends are achieved as a result over a period of time. As goals, potential values remain in the future not the present. They have no actuality prior to creative actualization, thus are in no sense “ontic” or “ontological.” Thus, they cannot be attributes of a substance. Substance presumes the being of the substance. However, goods must be creatively actualized with valued qualities for the actuality of a quality to inhere. Plants creatively actualized their own lives by creating a toehold among the rocks and with animals created the biosphere. A world of “being” would have been stable, thus life would not have arisen, a decisive argument against “ontology.” Differences cannot arise from stability. Whereas “being” is oriented toward the present (as “presencing”), value is future oriented as creative. Duration is not the temporal mode

of value, since value marks an improvement, amelioration, not a becoming. Differentiation in view of a *telos* is enacted, one that “was not.” The “present” is what was enacted or aimed at in the past. The present reflects norms and evaluations from the past. However, the other dimensions of time are not excluded. Instead, value as creative actualization involves a beginning, choosing a project; a middle, taking action to achieve the goal; and an end. The worthwhile goal regulates the whole dynamic creative activity and gives it a unity. The dimensions are united and given worth and meaning. Creative actualization involves evaluation of worthwhile goals as a start in time. Making or other actions and activities are the middle, while achievement at a point in time is the end.¹³ Creative actualization of the goal is the end of the action or activity, which limits it as a finishing.¹⁴ “End” is an equivocal (ambiguous) since “end” can mean both a goal, that which remains to be done; and finish, the achievement of the goal. The goal is separable from achievement as value. Action comes to an end when the value is achieved, so value can linger after action.

Value is not identical with the end as a goal, however. Value inheres as inherent to what has been creatively actualized as a good. Value as either intrinsic or inherent constitutes an “in itself,” and as such is not a goal, not teleological.¹⁵ The goal is what is aimed at by the activity. Achieving the goal is the result. Value is the point at which the end is reached: no further effort is required, since the end point is achieved because it has been creatively actualized, that is, has value. Value regulates

¹³ Thus there is a “narrative” to creative actualization, which ties it more to Aristotle’s *Poetics* than to his *Metaphysics*, although the notion of potentiality and actuality is incorporated into the latter. However, creative actualization is not literary, since creation of literature is only one mode of creative actualization: the literary is one species of creative actualization. Narrative is not privileged, but merely representative.

¹⁴ This presumes the differentiation of value, action and end. I will address this point to some degree in the next paragraph.

¹⁵ This is despite Aristotle’s identification of the good and the end (*N.E.* I, 1 et al.). This equation correctly identifies achievement of the end with the good, as a quantitative unity, but is likely to confuse the issue by identifying good with goals. Thus value is more than an analytic element.

both goal and result as the test or point for actualization. However, value is not “present” as an objective or goal. Creative actualization here remains as a project: a projected end. Purposes and goals are pursued by action until they are actualized: until their accomplishment puts an end to the discrete activity. Values in relation to ends are the worthwhile element in any end that is pursued. They justify the worth of ends: whether some end is worth pursuing.

Creative actualization involves practicality as actualization, that is, feasibility. In relation to action and ends, practicality involves the discovery of values in practice, in action or activity. Novelties are discovered through experimentation, trial and error, and testing out hypotheses and other norms in the actual world. The actual feasibility of possibilities in the world is discovered by testing and creation, not by theory.¹⁶ The discovery of value cannot be a priori; it must be tested. As with goals, practicality is temporal, the attempt to solve problems over a period of time. Value emerges over time in historical advances. Values are independent of conceptualization, ideas and other possibilities from the realm of evaluation. Conceiving a possibility as worthwhile is very different from achievement, which requires creative actualization, that is, the feasibility of the possibility. Imagining a project and achieving it are separated by a time in which the possible is made actual. Thus, we cannot investigate the value of what is valuable starting from consciousness, since “value” in the mind or imagination, projected value, is in the realm of possibilities, not value. Value as involving consciousness of any kind, including feeling, attitudes, and so on, is in the realm of evaluation, not value, that is, whether ideas or feelings are *worth* acting on. Value is distinct from evaluation, since the latter governs the possible, which has not yet been actualized as feasible or practicable. Evaluation as a critical notion regarding the value of a value does not

make reference to consciousness except in the personal mode of value.

The pragmatic aspect of value is staying true to practicality. One nail of the same lot bends while the other does not. The former is “no good,” although they are conceptually and perceptually identical as nails. Their worth becomes differentiated in practice. Even the difference between individuals may be revealed by practice. Pragmatics means that principles are normative but that circumstances are the context of creative actualization. Pragmatics are true to circumstances as much or as more as to principles. The critical evaluation that “practice makes perfect” would be reformulated as “practice makes actual” and “practice makes better.” Pragmatics means that actualization has its own sphere that requires as much attention as inspiration: the realm for critical evaluation. Without such attention to the practical sphere no value ensues. Actualization as melioristic is a pragmatic view of good: good as improvement. The slow accretion of such goods is a bettering, the only good available to us as finite creatures. Pragmatics simply recognizes that we are not God: we cope as best we can but are limited in our powers. Our results are not perfect but limited by the constraints of feasibility, time, funds, circumstances, and so on.¹⁷ However, a Utopian solution is nowhere forthcoming or practicable. Improvements, on the other hand, where practicable, are betterments and so should be adopted.

Since value as the creative actualization of a goal ends action, value ends a causal chain of action to consequence, means to end. The action comes to an end with creative actualization, that is, a successful project. The act is completed when the end as goal is achieved and the worthwhile creatively actualized. Thus, new acts can be undertaken; the act is differentiated through achievement of the end. By ending an activity, creative actualization gives the activity meaning. The action or activity is finite and thus bounded: neither infinite nor endless. The action is grounded, the activity finite and

¹⁶ Practice is distinct from practicality as action is to feasibility. Of course, an action can be feasible while its end is not: this further reveals the distinction.

¹⁷ A perfect actuality, such as God described by the superlative mode, would evaluate perfectly and thus not require pragmatics.

thus is meaningful since it is not without purpose and significance. The value justifies as it ends the activity by its grounding in world as result. The world is improved and given new meaning by the birth of a new good.

Meaning is a species of value.¹⁸ Activities are meaningful because they are valuable. Value differentiates the endless stream of activity with a genuine change for the better. Even labor comes to an end with the completion of a finite task. Grounds for meaningfulness are ends of activity, which justify the activity, differentiate purposes, and thus end the futility of mere becoming. Change is thus created, and action moves from futile becoming to the meaningful, since the world is improved. Alienation from the world is ended with amelioration. The change also marks the movement toward meliorism as the number and kind of goods are increased. Change is not for its own sake but is purposeful and valuable. Thus, contrary to Arendt, labor also has a “fruit,” in completion of the task.¹⁹ The “fruit of our labor” is completion of the harvest. Agriculture is not an endless becoming, since it improves the food supply and is more reliable and fecund than gathering. We evaluate agriculture as an improvement over a haphazard or unreliable food supply that achieves the goal of an adequate food supply.

Only values can give significance to time by differentiating temporal moments as significant. Value differentiates moments and thereby gives worth to moments. Being or existence, as static, makes time irrelevant. Although becoming is temporal, time is not actually significant for becoming since there is no beginning or end to becoming only endless flux. Becoming as a coming to be is an endless cycle unless it is altered, changed in accord with values, a goal that can alter change for

the better, differentiating moments in terms of quality or some other mode of value. One starry night resembles another in most respects, but a work of art is unique. The temporal flow is not similar to all others—endless becoming—but has an end, a limit or goal that makes it unique.

Just as activity is given meaning by connecting actors to their world, so do values connect the future and the present. The present, or what is actual reflects past evaluations and their successful creative actualization. Critical evaluation of the results may stimulate further action with the goal of future improvement. The future becomes clearer with valued goals. However, the value of the present is not overlooked, since it holds the record of successful creative actualizations. Those who value are the judges of time. One activity ceases, and they must judge or evaluate how the next time frame will be used. The time can be spent well or futilely: it can be wasted by mere becoming or acted upon wisely in a valuable manner. We are freed from futile becoming, from a Sisyphean fate, by values.

In summary, the passivity of previous value theory as affective is ended by creative actualization. The world is improved by action, not by contemplation. Meaning is not imposed upon us by a transcendent or historical agency: meaning is not determined. Meaning as a species of value is discovered in the world: investigated, revealed, uncovered, and created. Values give action and time meaning by bringing activities to an end. This end is a change and improvement. By distinguishing a time period as important, time is given meaning, which it lacks in mere becoming. Improvement is the end of a cycle of coming to be.

We cannot make a machine work by willing it to work, desiring it will work, emoting at it, feeling it should work, having an “attitude” that it should work or any other subjective factor. A machine that does not work requires action to fix it; when fixed we have recreated the machine for its intended purpose. A machine that was “no good” is now repaired, so good again, regardless of our whims, attitudes and other psychological

¹⁸ Obviously, I am using meaning in the sense of value, not the analytic sense of the meaning of a concept. However, the latter is actually based on the former, since meaning is a norm and its creative actualization as a word in an utterance is a species of creative actualization (cf. “speech acts”). Further, since analysis or division can go on ad infinitum (cf. splitting the indivisible, the a-tom), an “end” to this activity is required for use of language at the point where meaning is reached. Value is the ultimate basis for analysis into “simple” or singular elements. “Simple” itself is defined normatively and this is the unit of analysis, the end of the process.

¹⁹ For Arendt’s view see *The Human Condition*.

factors. Psychology is irrelevant to value, although it may be a factor in valuation and evaluation. But we should not confuse value with either valuation or evaluation. Similarly, the good of the repaired machine is not apart in some “intelligible” realm but very much embodied in the here and now: inherent.

Values, then, are not transcendent ideals in the Platonic sense, since they make a practical difference in action. Among other grounds, values are not similar to Platonic ideals since they do not have “more real being.”²⁰ They are not apart in some objective, intelligible realm (Scheler, the Neo-Kantians), not purely normative, since they are actualized in and through worldly successful action over time. They are not objective, as they are not “beings,” since value is independent of goods, and more general. They do not persist as “beings,” but mark change and improvement. Again, they are not subjective ideals, since they are actualized in the world by efficacious action. Such ideals are only of potential value until creatively actualized. Value is indifferent with respect to subjectivity and objectivity, the problematic of Cartesian consciousness. This problematic is only a small part, not the whole: one difference among others of the larger whole of values. Values are not “concepts” since they are manifested in world through action as differentiations. They are not imaginary although they are not present until creatively actualized. Because they must be enacted, they may be

imperfectly actualized in comparison with the imagined goal.²¹ They are ambiguous in some respects since what is truly good may be problematic.

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²⁰ Creative actualization is the denial of “being.”

²¹ However, they inform imagination with normative identities during acculturation and development. I will cover this topic in a projected future work on imagination.