

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF ATTITUDE-DEPENDENT ACCOUNTS OF VALUE INSPIRED BY MAX SCHELER

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Abstract

This article presents a phenomenological critique of attitude-dependent accounts of value in contemporary axiology and argues that the notion of objective value is unproblematic if understood correctly. Through a phenomenological critique of ideal-typical versions of dispositionalist and fitting attitude accounts of value, the article argues that a careful phenomenology of evaluation can clarify some fundamental issues about the nature and existence of objective value. The critique draws inspiration from classic phenomenological analyses of evaluation found in Max Scheler's *Formalismus in der Ethik und Materiale Wertethik (Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values)*. Through a phenomenological critique of ideal-typical versions of dispositionalist and fitting attitude accounts of value, the article argues that a careful phenomenology of evaluation can clarify some fundamental issues about the nature and existence of objective value. The critique draws inspiration from classic phenomenological analyses of evaluation found in Max Scheler's *Formalism* and Edmund Husserl's genetic phenomenology. Considering how values phenomenally present themselves in lived-experience, the article investigates the relation between evaluative attitudes, such as propositional judgments, beliefs, preferences, and intentional emotions, and the objects of such attitudes. The article argues that any attitude-dependent account of value faces the problem that at least some experienced value properties are objective in the sense of being precisely independent of evaluative attitudes.

Keywords

Phenomenology of value; Max Scheler; objective value; fitting attitude accounts of value

1. Introduction

One of the most critical issues for a theory of value that analyses values in terms of their necessary relation to subjective attitudes is to account for the objective feature of experienced value. Both dispositionalist and fitting attitude accounts are promising attempts to solve this problem. They aim to reconcile some notion of objective value with the conception that values are necessarily dependent on human attitudes. Through a phenomenological critique of this argumentative strategy, I argue that such compatibilism has fundamental problems. This is due to the feature of at least some values: their experienced objectivity is characterised precisely by attitude-independence. I argue that nothing mystical is implied by this feature, as is often assumed in the debate. We are motivated to see this if we are careful in our reconstructive analysis of evaluative experience, and thoughts in Max Scheler can help clarify this point.

I sketch the contours of ideal-typical versions of a dispositionalist account and a fitting attitude theory of value in the context of the phenomenology of value (2). The two accounts presented are meant to exemplify typical positions that account for value in terms of their necessary relation to evaluative attitudes. They function in the article as means for highlighting systematic points about the broader issue as such, i.e. the relation between evaluative attitudes and values, considering the phenomenology of evaluation, including not least the experienced objectivity of values. The following phenomenological critique (3), inspired by Max Scheler and Edmund Husserl, addresses the relation between evaluative attitudes and intentional objects of value as such and serves as a general criticism of any account that depicts all value as essentially dependent on attitudes. Based on the points established in the phenomenological critique, I then suggest a possible phenomenologically consistent answer to the ontological worries about the notion of objective value (4) and end the article with some brief, concluding remarks (5).

2. The phenomenology of evaluation and attitude-dependent accounts of value

That value has an ‘objective phenomenology’ has been accepted by many in the metaethical literature, even by prominent anti-realists, although they claim this feature of experience can be explained away (Mackie, 1977; Blackburn, 2001). What is widely recognised is not that values are objective in a robust sense, but that we experience values ‘as if’ they are objective: Just like we experience the colour, shape, and weight of things as something belonging to our world, we experience the world as bestowed with value. The goodness and badness of things, events, and persons are not experienced as merely products of arbitrary subjective or cultural projections upon the world.

However, one can easily miss the crucial details of this characterisation of evaluative experience. This is unfortunate since it can lead to confusion about what ‘objectivity’ amounts to in the case of values. A genetic phenomenological reconstruction of value can bring significant details to the discussion that avoids this problem, as I aim to illustrate in the following: Whether we experience aesthetic, prudential, or moral values, values are given in experience in a way that presents them as if they are, in a sense, objective. Phenomenologically, this point relates to the way we experience the relation between our intentional objects of value and the acts or attitudes in and through which values are presented.

To illustrate, let us consider some examples. Take a simple case in the context of aesthetic value: Drinking my coffee, I have a unified, Gestalt-like experience of the flavours of the coffee. They present themselves as having positive and negative value qualities for me given their sensational, phenomenal qualities, and as a result, I am prompted to acknowledge this. The property of being positive or negative (or a complex of positive and negative) is the minimal individuating feature of value in the phenomenological sense. The aesthetic value qualities presented seem to shape my opinion about the taste, they do not present themselves as something contingent upon my higher-order opinion about them – or contingent upon anyone else's opinion for that matter. In other words, whether the coffee has these non-instrumental value qualities for me in this minute is not experienced as up to me to decide. Even if my taste for coffee is an acquired taste, the qualities are just there as phenomena and parts of my lived-experienced world. This point echoes what Max Scheler refers to when he emphasises that value is, as a matter of brute fact, part of the ‘richness’ of our direct experience of the world (Scheler, 2007, I. Teil, II., A). Even my fully formed desire for the coffee seems derived from the fact that the coffee presents itself experientially or has been presenting itself in experience (perhaps anticipated) as positive to me. Having propositional desires is in other words not experienced in an axiological vacuum, and we do not experience evaluations to be the results of such desires – a crucial phenomenological point too easy to miss in contemporary discussions.

I desire that X because X presents itself as good; X does not present itself to be good in experience given that I desire it. A propositional desire is only formed in experience on the background of something being given to be somehow of value, whether present or anticipated, although such value experience is often occurring in the periphery of attention (the neglect of which might explain why some would not recognise it as a case of genuine evaluative presentation). This is arguably no different in prototypical examples from other and more complex domains of value than simple aesthetic cases, examples such as other-regarding and morally significant value experiences. If I witness someone on the street brutally attacking a perfectly innocent person, the experienced disvalue of this event, the unique brutality and negative quality of what is there in front of me, presents itself to be an essential part of the intentional object of the observation itself and not merely something I project upon the situation.

Of course, we cannot rule out a priori that what presents itself to be of positive or negative value is, in fact, nothing but the result of my projection, and experience verifies that sometimes this is the case, just like in cases of non-veridical sense perception. Phenomenologically, it is crucial to be aware that reaching such corrective conclusions are the results of modifying, corrective experiences, often through recontextualising acts of abstraction and deliberation. Corrective experience does not alter the fact that value is originally given as independent of the cognitive or conative propositional attitudes and stances we take towards the value. The fundamental phenomenological point is that my desire to make the violence stop or to help seems to be a result of intended value properties of the situation, rather than vice versa – just like it is the case with my negative opinion and perhaps my emotion of indignation formed about the situation. Put in different terms, higher-order attitudes such as

propositional beliefs and desires and intentional emotions are constitutively dependent on simpler forms of evaluation (Tappolet, 2012; Engelsen, 2018), just like there is in general, to phrase it in phenomenological terms, a hierarchy of constitution between predicative judgments and the simpler experiences grounding them. (Ferran, 2008; Husserl, 1966, 1999).

A further aspect of evaluative intentionality, whether aesthetic, prudential or moral, is a normativity attached to the intentional object of the experience. (This does not imply, however, that we can adequately understand experienced value as such in terms of normativity, a point to which we return). As Max Scheler emphasises, it is an aspect of any experience of something of value that the value is presented as having the feature 'ought-to-be-realised' or 'ought-not-to-be-realised' (Scheler, 2007, p. 214). Experiencing the positive aesthetic qualities of my coffee, the bitter-sweet taste and the perking qualities present themselves as of positive value, and a structural aspect of the phenomenon is that the qualities themselves seem to give me a good reason to drink the coffee all things being equal, i.e. considered in isolation from the broader spatial and temporal context. The latter point is crucial and neglecting it can be the source of much confusion about values and the reasons they provide. Analysing value qualities and the normative reasons they provide phenomenologically, we abstract from the broader context in which they are always given. They cannot be said necessarily to give decisive or categorical reasons for specific actions, beliefs or decisions before considering them in their relations to the broader spatial and temporal context of other values and normative reasons in which they are always given (cf., Husserl, 1988). If we consider the matter in the broader context of my life, too much coffee could be bad for me in the long run, regardless of its positive aesthetic (or other) value qualities; or better coffee to drink could be available to me instead. Nevertheless, when we consider the value quality as it is given in isolation, at least a *pro tanto* reason must be recognised as a constitutive moment, an essential abstract aspect, of the object of the evaluative experience.

Experienced value does not by necessity outline what is categorically required to do, but it does speak in favour of specific actions and form the constitutive, lived-experienced background for any consideration of decisive normative reasons. That is why it makes sense to ascribe to evaluative experience the property of being at least proto-normative (Klawonn, 2004) if we take 'normative' to denote something that prescribes decisive reasons. The same point applies to the experience of morally significant value: The brutal violence is experienced to be having in itself a 'requiredness' attached to it, to use an expression from Wolfgang Köhler or simply an ought all things being equal (Köhler, 1966; Monticelli, 2013). I experience the violence as 'calling' or 'demanding' me to do something; to intervene, to get help, to call the police, etc. – although something else in my horizon of experience may provide me with better reasons for doing something different. In general, we do not experience values, whether positive or negative, as neutral with regards to our actions. On the contrary, values are experienced as founding our correct actions, if not in a categorical sense then at least *pro tanto*.

Even though the fundamental objective feature of the phenomenology of value has been widely recognised in the metaethical debate, John Leslie Mackie's classic so-called 'queerness-argument' still seems to strike many to be convincing (Mackie, 1977, Joyce, 2001). It says that the existence of something which can have normative and motivating properties, independent of our human attitudes, is incompatible with a sensible contemporary picture of the world; and values seem to have these exact properties.

Given that the objective phenomenology of value is nevertheless typically recognised, a prevalent tendency in contemporary metaethics is that prominent accounts of value seem to be specifically designed to embrace this quality or at least explain it. The objective character of evaluative experience is combined with the idea that value is nevertheless essentially dependent on our attitudes in one way or another. Such accounts thus accept the basic premise of the queerness argument that value independent of human attitudes is problematic, but insist that even on this premise, the objective phenomenology of value can be taken seriously. Many versions of dispositionalism and fitting attitude accounts exemplify such an attempt to construe compatibilism between attitude-dependence of value and value objectivity.

Attitude-dependent accounts of value have often been formulated as a form of dispositionalism about value (e.g., Lewis et al., 1989). Dispositionalist accounts of value that analyse value in terms of their relation to specific attitudes claim that an object has value if and only if it disposes to particular

kinds of attitudes in given subjects under particular kinds of circumstances. Each account differs with regards to what it takes to count as the relevant type of attitude, the relevant subjects and circumstances. The value-constituting attitude can, e.g., be claimed to be a desire, a belief, a judgment, an intentional emotion; the value-constitutive subjects can be specified as, for instance, normal or rational; and the value-constitutive circumstances can be claimed to be normal circumstances, ideal epistemic circumstances, or the like. For instance, beauty as a value could, according to an ideal-typical dispositionalist, attitude-dependent account, be described as constituted by that which rational subjects would judge to be beautiful in circumstances where they were fully informed. The relevant value-constitutive attitude is here taken to be a judgment performed by a rational subject in normal circumstances. Constraints such as rationality and ideal epistemic circumstances typically serve the function of accounting for the objective features of value. Not any arbitrary, subjective disposition to judge, desire, or believe that something is beautiful can count as constituting the value of beauty, the argument would go, only the attitudes of certain idealised subjects under certain idealised circumstances would. This way, the typical idealised version of attitude-dependent dispositionalism can embrace a sort of objectivity – not any arbitrary value attitude is constitutive of value – while maintaining the core idea that human attitudes are constitutive of value since they insist that value as such is necessarily related to (perhaps idealised) human attitudes.

However, one worry about the ability of dispositionalism to account for the objectivity of value is that, despite the efforts, this analysis still seems to leave relevant properties of value too arbitrary. Fallibility, for instance, is often plausibly seen as a necessary feature of our epistemic condition when dealing with objective properties, not least value properties. We must recognise our necessary epistemic limitations when trying to understand such objects; we must recognise our fallibility. However, fallibility with regards to evaluation seems *ex hypothesi* to be out of the question for the idealised subject, according to the idealised dispositionalism, since this subject's dispositions to have particular attitudes are taken to be constitutive of values in the first place.

In order to make room for fallibility, many attitude-dependent theories are instead construed as fitting attitude accounts. In addition to the positing of a necessary relation between value and certain (perhaps idealised) attitudes, a further constraint that one can lay on an attitude-dependent account of value is that the attitude suggested to be constitutive of value is described as not only actually present, but something which ought to be produced. If this is the case, that particular attitude-dependent account of value is a version of a so-called fitting or appropriate attitude-account. Brentano is often seen as one of the original proponents of a fitting attitude account of value. Brentano expresses the basic thought of this approach to the analysis of value in his *The Origin of our Knowledge of Right and Wrong / Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis*:

In the broadest sense of the term, the good is that which is worthy of love, that which can be loved with a love that is correct (Brentano, 2012 [1889])

According to the Brentanoian fitting attitude account, something is not worthy of love (or another kind of emotion or another attitude) because it is good, something is good because it deserves our love (or another relevant attitude taken to be essential). In other words, it is the appropriate attitude which constitutes what is good rather than the good being that which prescribes normative attitudes that fit given situations, or rather than individual attitudes being necessary means to bringing values to attention, as one would perhaps tend to think. According to fitting attitude theories, something is basically of value if it ought to produce some specifiable attitude. Since the given value is not constituted by the given subject's actual response, but by a "fitting", "appropriate", "required" or "correct" (etc.) response, unlike the 'pure' dispositionalist account, the fitting attitude theory can allow for the responding subject's attitude to be fallible, even in ideal circumstances. This solves the problem of fallibility.

Dispositionalism and fitting attitude-accounts of value avoid relativism and pure subjectivism by providing necessary non-subjective criteria for what can sensibly be called valuable. However, as I will argue in the following, even though some kind of objectivity of value is thus recognised, considered phenomenologically, they nevertheless turn things on their head.

3. A phenomenological critique inspired by Max Scheler

Through the critique below of the two ideal-typical attitude-dependent accounts of value, I aim to show that taking the phenomenology of objective value seriously and scrutinising what this more precisely amounts to without letting a veil of over-sceptical abstractions obscure the perspective, leads to conclusions that do not support the attitude-dependent accounts. Further, the phenomenological critique does not at all imply anything mystical, as is often supposed when one departs from attitude-dependent accounts of value. An attentive phenomenology of value and evaluation points in the direction of an ontology of values that recognises their property of being essentially independent of subjects' higher-order attitudes and intentional states, be it propositional beliefs, judgments, desires, or emotions. The two ideal-typical attitude-dependent accounts of value above both fail to properly embrace the objective phenomenology of value they were designed to integrate – basically because the experience of value as being objective is first of all characterised by being the experience that value is independent of our attitudes. The experience that there is a kind of independent axiological 'fact of the matter' when we are struck by value in experience, to use an expression by Kevin Mulligan (Mulligan, 2009) is the result of an experienced presentation of attitude-independence, a feature of evaluative phenomenology too easily overlooked by a veil of abstractions or simply ignored.

Consider the dispositionalist account first. This kind of theory, as so many theories, often make an analogy between value and colour, and this analogy can serve as the point of entrance to a phenomenological critique – of simple forms of dispositionalism about colour as well as value: An object's property of being red is arguably relational and dispositional, i.e. a disposition to be seen as red by normal observers in normal circumstances. We can grant this, but a crucial point about the formation and meaning constitution of colour-dispositions remains: There is something essential about colour that has not been accounted for by such dispositionalist account. Redness as such qua seen is arguably irreducible and a *sui generis* feature of redness insofar as we cannot account for it in simpler terms. It just makes no sense to try to explain to a natural-born blind person what the quality of redness as such is like to experience; redness considered as a phenomenal property must be seen to be adequately grasped, and this point is crucial. Without explicit or tacit reference to the phenomenal property, one fails to apprehend a constituting aspect of colour as such, either because one is simply unable to do so (as in the case of the natural-born blind person), or for the reason that one abstracts from the phenomenon to the extent that one forgets or neglects the original mode of presentation of colour. A vital phenomenological point here is that the phenomenal property has meaning-theoretical priority over any disposition, it is foundational, and must be considered necessary to an adequate analysis of colour properties and concepts. Basically, in order to adequately account for red qua dispositional property of an object, reference to the intrinsic property of redness qua phenomenal property must be implied: When we refer to red objects, more or less tacitly, we refer to the disposition to be experienced as red (by normal observers in normal circumstances, in bright light, etc.), not merely judged. Any higher-order attitude referring to red without this reference to the phenomenal property, e.g. one that reduces colour to dispositions to judge about it, is an abstraction from the original mode of presentation of the colour, leaving a constitutive quality of it out of the picture. Thus, the phenomenal property of redness has a grounding function in the formation of the concept of a red object; and therefore, such dispositional account cannot be adequate.

We can make a parallel analysis of value and a corresponding parallel phenomenological critique of attitude-dependent dispositionalism about value: Take it that the rational subjects under ideal epistemic circumstances, whose attitudes are supposed to constitute values according to the ideal-typical dispositionalist account, are disposed to judge that sunsets are beautiful. According to such account, rational subjects are not disposed to judge sunsets to be beautiful due to the fact that sunsets are beautiful; sunsets are beautiful because such idealised subjects judge them to be so. In other words, on a standard dispositionalist account of value, such judgment is constitutive of the aesthetic value of a sunset. The critical phenomenological point is that such account of value cannot be fundamental and adequate since an experienced quality is necessarily implied; any disposition to evaluate in the form of a judgment presupposes a distinct kind of experience which is more fundamental. We can reasonably ask these critical questions: what quality is phenomenally given to these rational subjects under ideal circumstances supposed to constitute value as they experience the

beautiful sunset? What is the value of a beautiful sunset like qua appearing quality? The general point is that the phenomenal value quality has priority with regards to an analysis of value; it is always at least tacitly presupposed in evaluative dispositions, which is why it makes perfect sense at all to ask such questions.

That the phenomenally given value quality has priority is the reason why the attitude-dependent dispositional account cannot amount to be an adequate account of value per se, that is, of value considered in its own right: We lack a reference to the phenomenal property of value. As an analysis of established norms as well as of things of value, a dispositional analysis might well be accurate, if this necessary reference to possible value experiences is part of it. However, as Scheler emphasises, only on the background of a superficial phenomenological analysis does one fail to distinguish between value properties per se and the objects having these properties, the goods in Scheler's terminology (Scheler, 2007, p. 42). The things which can have beauty can vary with circumstances; that the value of beauty considered in its own right is aesthetically good and positive and that beauty is aesthetically better than ugliness is on the contrary examples of invariable evaluative features presupposed and tacitly referred to whenever something is actually held to be beautiful. Any determination of a thing of value, a good, makes reference to an experienced quality of value, in- or explicit.

A similar phenomenological critique applies to fitting attitude theories of value: As already emphasised, fitting attitude accounts describe value as constituted by normativity, the good as constituted by the ought; what is valuable, according to this analysis, is constituted by the attitude one ought to apply, or the attitude fitting the given situation which amounts to the same. However, to say that such relations to a given appropriate, correct, fitting, or reasonable attitude are constitutive of given value qualities – be it the tastiness of the coffee, the beauty of the sunset or the brutality of the violent action – is also to turn things on their head. Basically, when an attitude is experienced to be something one ought to adopt, reference to an experience of something of value is always presupposed. As Scheler formulates it in his *Formalismus* in his criticism of Brentano:

Whenever one speaks of an ought, the comprehension of value must have occurred. Whenever we say that something ought to happen or ought to be, a relation between a positive value and a possible real bearer of this value, such as a thing, an event, etc., is co-intuited. That a deed 'ought' to be, presupposes that the 'ought' is grasped in the intention of the value of the deed [...] every ought has its foundation in a value (and not vice versa) [...] (Scheler, 2007, pp. 182-183)

The main phenomenological point against the fitting attitude account of value is that nothing can ever be given as fitting or appropriate if not presupposed as more or less valuable, positive or negative. Moreover, this relation between axiological and deontic phenomenal content is not merely a contingent one; it is a necessary structure of the formation of axiological meaning in experience: When we reconstruct the experienced formation of the ought we see that it cannot possibly occur without reference to something of value or disvalue. Nothing is possibly presented in experience as being reasonable, correct, or fitting to do without being co-presented as worthy of doing. Whether a moral or an aesthetic object presents itself as something requiring specific actions, the object must be co-given as something being positive or negative, of value or disvalue, at least tacitly or in the 'margin' of one's attentive experience. The axiologic-deontic relation is, in other words, a relation of meaning-constitution, a relation between possible givenness. Just like no disposition to have a particular attitude can be the foundation of any colour or value, no fitting or appropriate attitude can be fundamental to the analysis of value, since a phenomenal content of value is constitutive of the normative attitude, rather than the other way around.

Max Scheler expresses a connected point in his analysis of preference and the apprehension of relations of value (Scheler, 2007, p. 84). According to Scheler, the understanding of the fact that one value is higher or lower than another is originally given in what he calls an 'a priori preference'. The essential point of this concept is that there are necessary relations between certain evaluative phenomena always given prior to or tacitly in our particular empirical preferences of goods. Moreover, the apprehension of these relations between values, given the name 'a priori preference' by

Scheler, is constitutive of our empirical preferences of goods. To take a simple illustrating example: It does not make any sense for a human being to prefer disagreeableness to agreeableness, or ugliness to beauty as such, i.e. considered per se in abstraction from any broader context. On the contrary, we would assume that something was terribly wrong with a person always or generally having positive attitudes towards disagreeableness or ugliness if that case is even possible. The genetic-phenomenological point is that in its original mode of appearance, the act of distinguishing better from worse cannot be understood as an act of actively deciding or willing what to prefer: Instead, there is a distinct aspect of passivity and receptivity to its apprehension, since it is first and foremost an immediate presentation of relations of value taking place prior to any active choice of will (Engelsen, 2013; Husserl, 1988). This experienced presentation constitutes the necessary content founding the actual preferences, i.e. it is the meaning based on which any active empirical preference, decision, or wilful choice can be constituted.

This genetic-phenomenological point can be broadened to other evaluative attitudes as well. Higher-order axiologically laden attitudes are not formed in an experiential vacuum. They always form in and through experienced presentations of relations of value qualities: The value content, the value 'material', of evaluative attitudes, is always pre-given our empirically formed attitudes, be it evaluative preferences, desires, beliefs, emotions, or judgments. Such attitudes are axiologically laden and thus presuppose a pre-attitudinal grasp of value. Again, the essential point is: That which according to Brentano and others is supposed to account for values – i.e. normative attitudes – actually presuppose a more or less tacit reference to presented value material.

It is essential to the original mode of givenness of at least simple and 'primary' values (on which more complex values are construed) and their relations that they are experientially presented as independent of what we may believe, judge, desire, or prefer concerning them. This point holds even though such attitudes can function as essential ways of making values thematic objects of attention, and even though the attitude-founding presentation of value often occurs tacitly and pre-reflectively. Regardless of whether evaluative or deontic intentional states intend their objects as something to be actualised in the world or as something in the world to be correctly presented (i.e., regardless of their 'direction of fit') (Searle 2005), considered in the perspective of genetic phenomenology, they are higher-order acts of consciousness that take certain values and their relations to be part of their thematic object of attention. Whether we have to do with propositional desires of the form 'S desires that X' or propositional beliefs or judgments of the form 'S ought to do X', the phenomenal value quality of X is necessarily presupposed and part of the intentional object. In both cases, a value quality is part of the intentional object as something to be realised in the world. This, if anything, is the mark of the objective phenomenology of value: Value qualities are something given to and presupposed by evaluative and deontic propositional attitudes, not something constituted by them. That agreeableness per se is preferable to disagreeableness, and that beauty per se is desirable to ugliness, is precisely given in experience as independent of any intentional attitude taking these properties as their thematic object, i.e. entertaining an object to be agreeable, beautiful, and the like. This crucial point is inconsistent with any account of value that makes all value necessarily dependent on propositional attitudes, whether actual, idealised, or normative.

One possible line of reply for the proponent of a fitting attitude account of value is to deny that the phenomenology of value ultimately dictates our conclusions. However, I do not claim that how things appear should always be taken at face value; only that phenomenology establishes an explanandum for any theory. As long as the fitting attitude account cannot account for a core feature of many experiences of value – their attitude-independence – it fails to provide an adequate account. Another, and perhaps more promising, line of reply is to argue that the phenomenological analysis presented here is inadequate and insist that value is experienced as being dependent on normativity; our concepts of value make no sense without acknowledging their inherent normative features, and we can only understand the feature of 'oughtness' in relation to at least possible attitudes. I have no counter-response to this reply in this article, aside from the phenomenological analysis I present: Following Max Scheler and other phenomenologists, I take it that an 'oughtness' is indeed a constitutive feature of value. However, to pass the buck and make it the constitutive feature is to ignore the other side of the coin, as far as I can see. The phenomenological description should recognize that the axiological and deontic elements are, in fact, co-constitutive moments of the

experience of the intentional object of value. I have already mentioned the Gestalt-like nature of evaluative and normative experience, but a full exposition of this point exceeds the scope of this article. I have elaborated further on the original mode of presentation of value elsewhere (Engelsen, 2018).

It is worth to consider whether we should acknowledge that at least some of the more complex forms of value can be argued to be essentially attitude-dependent. For instance, some complex prudential values seem to be phenomenologically closely related to reflective attitudes. Consider this example: A person is forced to retire and experiences a loss of identity and meaning since her work life was very valuable to. However, after a period of reflection, she adapts to her new circumstances, recontextualises her priorities, and comes to see her new life to be better. One may argue that there is a necessary relation between her attitude of reflection and the complex prudential value of her new life circumstances. After all, without it, she would not have experienced the positive value of her new life and would still have experienced her retirement as unfavourable. However, one could also argue that this is only an epistemic condition, a way to bring the complex value of life into experience, not a necessary relation between the reflective attitude and the value itself; the overall positive value of her new circumstances was there to be recognized all along as a life possibility to be actualised. The details of this discussion exceed this article. In any case, I have not argued that all kinds of value are attitude-independent, merely that some are; this makes any account of value per se in terms of necessary relations to attitudes inadequate.

4. Overcoming value scepticism

The idea that attitudes constitute values, and the widely acknowledged scepticism about the very existence of values as represented by Mackie's queerness argument, might originate in part from a too-quick reconstructive analysis of some basic features of the experience of evaluation. The most promising way to counter the queerness argument is in my view to try and make intelligible a theoretical outlook on value realist premises which deflates the claim that values are mystical by de-mystifying the concept through careful phenomenological reconstruction. The attitude-dependent accounts of value that I have dealt with – ideal-typical versions of dispositionalism and fitting attitude theory – as well as proponents of value scepticism in various theoretical forms, may all be characterised by their lack of attentiveness to such very fundamental phenomenological distinctions and foundational relations. The following points echo some classic phenomenological distinctions, between acts and their objects and between higher- and lower-order phenomenal properties in hierarchical orders of constitution (cf., Husserl, 1966, 1999).

A first step in the demystification of value is, I think, to grant the point that simple values must have a necessary relation to phenomenal properties, that is, a necessary relation to at least a possible subjective first-personal experience. I think we can grant this essential point, i.e. that insofar as they exist, values seem to have a necessary relation to living conscious beings. Without sentient beings in the world, values would probably not exist. This point actually seems to be in perfect accordance with the phenomenology of value: The kind of objectivity we can sensibly attribute to values is not objectivity in the exact same sense as, for instance, physical objects. Their mode of being is just different. As phenomenologists have often emphasised, the constitution of meaning is an achievement which is distinctively different for each kind of object (Husserl, 1966). Value scepticists often mistakenly suppose that claiming the objectivity of values implies that the kind of objectivity meant is the exact same as what is meant when we refer to the objectivity of objects in physical nature. On such false premises, it is easy to get convinced that objectivity cannot be right with regards to values, and it can seem a logical step to become a value scepticist. The point is, however, that the fact that an object is dependent on consciousness or living beings for its existence does not necessarily imply that it is not objective in the relevant epistemic sense.

There can be objective truths and facts of the matter concerning objects which are nevertheless dependent on the domain of the ontologically subjective, i.e. the experiences of sentient beings (Klawonn 2004, Searle 2005). Simple conscious-immanent objects are clear cases in point. A person making a part of her own stream of experience a thematic object of attention – for instance, a person reflecting on her own stomach-ache all the while it appears – is a simple and clear example of something which exists as an intentional object that constitutes a fact of the matter in the relevant

epistemic sense, even though it depends for its existence on being experienced. For any attitude directed at the stomach-ache qua its phenomenal givenness, e.g. a judgment or a belief about it, there are conditions of satisfaction determined by the subject-matter at hand itself. The nature of the subject-matter is precisely objective in the sense of not being dependent for its features on the propositional attitudes taking it as an object. Its 'objectivity' has nothing to do with being an experience-transcendent object, but this does not cancel out the fact that it is a genuine intentional object with conditions of success determined by the subject matter itself and not our attitudes towards it. The example illustrates that, unless one is willing to deny the phenomenologically obvious, there is no queerness about such kind of objectivity as such. In such cases, it is precisely attitude-independence (rather than, e.g., conscious-independence or experience-transcendence) which constitutes the objectivity of the subject matter in question. Basically, attitudes presuppose consciousness, not vice versa; and a higher-order intentional evaluative attitude is distinguishable from its value object, even if the object is necessarily related to consciousness or lived-experience.

Much more needs to be said about the ontology of value. Nevertheless, the above points suffice to establish that a notion of objectivity as attitude-independence is viable even though a necessary relation to someone's experience (not necessarily the experience of the person evaluating) is granted. With this notion of objectivity, there is nothing mystical in recognising that values are objective in the sense of being genuine intentional objects to deal with (Scheler, 2007, p. 41). That there exist such value properties which in themselves give experiencing subjects motivating and normative reasons for acting in specific ways and for believing certain things, strikes many in the debate to be queer. However, from a non-speculative and phenomenologically sensitive perspective, we consider value qualities in their original mode of givenness rather than imposing upon them a kind of objectivity akin to physical objects. In that light, the charge of queerness strikes to be unwarranted: That something is normatively reason-giving is a perfectly normal feature of experience, and the world of lived-experience is as real as anything – and something which contains objective evaluative properties in the relevant attitude-independent sense.

It should be emphasised that acknowledging attitude-independence as a core feature of at least many kinds of value is consistent with certain forms of dispositionalist and response-dependence accounts of value. One can argue that it is a feature of the phenomenology of value that primary values supervene on actual or possible states of mind of sentient beings. In other words, we can acknowledge that there are necessary relations between the formations of value meaning and certain kinds of mental states. Various thinkers in the phenomenological tradition have long argued for a necessary relation between emotions or feelings and the existence or the presentation of value properties, although it is not a trivial question how this relation is to be correctly understood (Drummond, 2008; Ferran, 2008; Husserl, 1988; Scheler, 2007; Engelsen 2018). It is perfectly compatible with the phenomenology of value to acknowledge that we ascribe value to things in virtue of their relations to how they are experienced, and this point amounts in itself to be an acknowledgement of a kind of dispositionalism about value. My coffee can be said to be black, even when no one is currently seeing it as such, but its disposition to be seen as black is a necessary feature of it. In the same way, my coffee has aesthetic value qualities, even if no one is currently drinking it, yet the disposition to be experienced as having certain aesthetic qualities might be constitutive of the qualities. It might be valuable in virtue of its disposition to be experienced as such. The problem arises if we reduce these states of mind which are co-constitutive of the value properties to be propositional or other higher-order attitudes. This reduction neglects the more robust attitude-independence of many kinds of value, which is a mark of their objectivity, and it neglects how such higher-order attitudes are necessarily formed through simpler value presentations.

5. Concluding remarks

Through a phenomenologically based critique, I have argued that at least some values and their relations are originally presented in experience as objective, in the sense that their nature is not given as contingent upon our attitudes. This analysis causes fundamental problems for ideal-typical versions of dispositionalist and fitting attitude accounts of value that intend to provide an account of the objectivity of values while maintaining a necessary relation between values and subjective attitudes.

Further, I have argued that much scepticism about value objectivity is based on a phenomenologically ungrounded notion of what counts as 'objective' in the domain of values. If we, following the phenomenology of value, denounce the idea that the objectivity of values has to do with values being objects transcending sentient experience, there is no ground for the scepticism. Instead, we can acknowledge the phenomenological point that values are genuine intentional objects that outline conditions of success for our evaluations. This point fits well with values being attitude-independent and is entirely consistent with acknowledging that values are dependent on (actual or possible) experience.

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