

Henryk Elzenberg\*

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *BEAUTY* AND *GOODNESS* [1933]\*\*

I

Theorists and practitioners alike are generally uncomfortable with the idea that *beauty*<sup>1</sup> and *goodness* are closely related notions, or indeed that they are identical, one and the same notion. Many a moralist or aesthetician would probably subscribe to that averment which was once addressed to Lipps, namely that *mistaking the beautiful for the ethical is among the gravest mistakes at all a student of aesthetics can make*<sup>2</sup>. That discomfort may stem from someone's abidance by solid research precepts (keeping mutually related domains, for purposes of scrutiny, distinctly apart from one another makes sense of course) as well as from obvious practical concerns: nothing is more devastating to art than submitting it to socially trivial terms of what is *ethical*, nor is there anything more disastrous in life than judging events or individuals in terms of their *beauty* alone, which so easily leads up to aesthetics of defeat or crime. Yet, an advocate of the idea that these are identical notions can claim to be following in the footsteps of a tradition of thinking, for ever since the term *καλός* appeared in such dual meaning in writings of the first Greek authors a propensity to commit that *gravest mistake* has been threading through the history of European thought. It is unfair to impute such preposterous absurdities to adherents of the idea. Nobody would seriously use the term *good* in meanings alien to axiology, as when one says, e.g. *a good pocket knife*, where *good* means something like *useful when doing things it is designed to do*. Further, it is significant that nobody has ever identified goodness with beauty as a *derivative* value. That is a more intricate matter which begs a word or two of comments.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term *beautiful* in a broad meaning, as synonymous with the expression *aesthetically valuable*, and not in any of possible narrow meanings.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Moos, *Die deutsche Ästhetik der Gegenwart*, 1919, vol. 1, p. 175.

Before delving into a closer scrutiny of the term *value* at large, you can such the term *derivative* value of a thing to denote, provisionally, – a value such that derives part of its reason of existence from the value of some other thing; for instance, a thing *A* would be valuable because a thing *B* is valuable, and because either *A* is in some way related to *B*, or the fact that *A* has a certain quality is in some way related to the value of thing *B*, for instance – or exclusively – it is in a relation of a means to an end. An *ultimate* or *own* value of a thing is thus a value whose reason of existence is in no part derived from the value of another thing. Undeniably, when talking of the *beauty* of a thing we *always* refer to some value such thing has of its own; when saying a thing is *good* we may be referring to a value of its own or to a value deriving from another: e.g. if you assume that harmonious sets are good, then a deed may be good both because it is good itself and because it is a condition for some other set to be harmonious. It is only in reference to *goodness* in the former of the two meanings that you can justifiably say it is identical with beauty; yet that not only does not strike one as a blatant absurdity but indeed shows right away that identifying a specific quality of goodness such that distinguishes it from beauty will be quite a tough job. The job is further compounded by that *beauty* for its part does not always have the specific quality that in simple reflection distinguishes it typically from *goodness*, namely beauty is not necessarily sensuous. Beautiful are deeds and characters and souls and historical figures and entire historical epochs and social patterns and mathematical proofs and mathematics as such, and not infrequently philosophical systems are charged that they are beautiful alone, instead of being logical and exact. That way, in a first simple approach, the qualities that highlight the differences between beauty and goodness get blurred in both notions. Beauty which is non-sensuous, and goodness which is non-derivative, free of external purpose and simple stock responses; beauty and goodness in the sense in which pure mathematics, mathematics of no immediate use, can reasonably be said to be beautiful and good at the same time – these two notions appear to be more closely related with each other than you may think in referring, say, to a *beautiful emerald* and a *good citizen*. It is rather the *identification* of a difference that is a problem suddenly. Try to think that over shall I say *out of hand*, without any deeper axiological reflection, and you will promptly see your imagination run aground. Naturally, this is no proof, not even an argument; this is merely a first move to bust certain stock responses and to illustrate the problem. That said it may come as less a surprise to readers if I concede I hold the idea of sameness of the two notions to be reasonable and that, under certain conditions, I might be willing to consider it a valid perception. Prospects of practical risks do not deter me, because these result from misconceptions closer reflection will dispel; considerations of method, in turn, in my case of axiologist representing on his own turf this natural and legitimate propensity of the mind to unify various conclusions, are different from those students of special domains face; and I may fend off at least certain theoretical charges perhaps by attenuating a contention which is called into question: for, I am not going to make a plea for the sameness of, but merely for the *subjectiveness of the difference* between, *beauty* and *goodness*. In such

unassertive wording, the view in question stands a good chance of emerging reinforced from the discussion; in particular, I see nothing there that might be at odds with any basic ideas of general axiology, nor with the definition of value itself such that would make me feel I should stop there.

## II

The idea that *goodness* is identical with *beauty* can be expressed in two ways: as a proposition regarding form, or as a proposition regarding substance. In a substantive proposition, the specific meanings of *good* and *beautiful* would not be identical, because the quality *good* would be different from the quality *beautiful*; what would be identical, though, are qualities whose presence in a thing *imparts* the quality of being *good* to the thing (*generating practical value*<sup>1</sup>) and qualities whose presence in a thing *imparts* to the thing the quality of being *beautiful* (*generating aesthetic value*). Should someone hold, e.g. that *goodness* and *beauty* are not one and the same but, say, a harmonious character, precisely because it is harmonious, becomes beautiful and good, such person would be making a substantive proposition. That seems to be the afore-mentioned case of Lipps, and I say *seems to be* only because his formulations are vague. Says Lipps, *The aesthetic concurs in substance with the ethical (das Ästhetische fällt mit dem Ethischen inhaltlich zusammen)*; what *constitutes the substance of beauty (den Inhalt des Schönen ausmacht)* is something which is *valuable ethically (ein ethisch Wertvolles)*<sup>2</sup>. The *substance* referred to in the above is of course not the substance in logical sense; the imprecise articulation notwithstanding it can be assumed that what is meant are value-generating qualities. *Goodness* and *beauty* at the same time is, according to Lipps, *what is human, everything which is positive in the human being, a free living out of one's life (das Menschliche, alles Positive am Menschen, jedes freie sich Ausleben)*<sup>3</sup>; never mind other, more involved, wordings of his. Clearly, that kind of propositions can be proven true only by carrying out a complete demonstration of the construction of substance in terms of the theory of beauty and of the construction of substance in terms of the theory of goodness, and, following a confrontation of the findings, by concluding that value-generating qualities in the one and the other domains turned out to be the same. Such an undertaking is imponderable as a practical exercise in an essay as brief and fragmentary as the present one, which cannot postulate too many things but has necessarily to move about in the vicinity of basic notions. But there is that other form of the sameness proposition (what I call the formal proposition) that does not presuppose such a substantive position and that can be discussed in a simple analysis of the terms *good* and *beautiful*. That other proposition would hold that the two *notions* are essentially identical with each other, so both terms have the same *meaning*; a more guarded contention about the subjectivity of the difference would then

<sup>1</sup> In my language I call the value which is commonly referred to as *good*, *practical* rather than *ethical*.

<sup>2</sup> *Archiv für systematische Philosophie*, vol. 5, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Ästhetik*, I, 525.

hold that identical is solely what in the substance of the two notions is objective. In what follows I am going to deal with this last-named formal proposition. Once it is shown to be valid, validity of the other proposition, namely that *goodness* and *beauty* are identical *in substance* in Lipps' sense, follows automatically; for, if *good* and *beautiful* do denote the same thing, then of course every quality that makes a thing *good* is thereby making it *beautiful* as well, and conversely. The sameness proposition will not have been brought to fall should the proposition turn out to be wrong, because discussion of the question of substance will still be open.

### III

The notion of value in reference to which I am now going to discuss the point can be described as follows. I use the adjective *valuable* in the meaning of *the way it should be*, or (this more verbose description is unfortunately more liable to be used in certain verbal manipulations) as meaning *having a quality (or qualities) which it should have*. This is to be understood not as meaning that the value is that quality the thing should have (so the question: *how should the thing be?* would be answered with: *valuable*), but that the thing should have a quality *c* (or more such qualities) other than value and that, where this condition is met, the thing is valuable. So the *value* of a thing is thus the circumstance *that it is as it should be*, or *that it has a quality – or qualities – it should have*. Such qualities are the *value-generating* qualities referred to above. This wording calls for more explanation, which might land us in many an aporia; suffice it to say, at this point, that we can easily do with such extra explanations without encumbering this discussion. The question of ultimate value and derivative value, on the other hand, have to be addressed. The preliminary distinction of these two at the outset has now to be transformed deeply. A briefest formulation would perhaps be as follows. The requirement of having a quality may hold in two cases: either with a view to the thing itself, or with a view to the circumstance that since the thing does have the quality, the thing itself or some other thing will acquire the quality which it should have with a view to itself. A thing that has a quality of the former type, is valuable ultimately; a thing that has a quality of the latter type, but does not have a quality of the former type, is valuable by derivation. In what follows the question of derivative values is addressed no more; so the words *value* and *valuable* will be used all along briefly to denote ultimate value. As regards the term *should*, which is used here in its basic and *categorical* sense usually employed in ethics and axiology, I assume it is understandable immediately; in particular, I just cannot see how this term can possibly be misconstrued as an abbreviated description of any psychological, social or biological fact, or merely as *expressing*<sup>1</sup> a befuddled state of mind, possibly as something like an interjection.

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<sup>1</sup> This term is being used here in a specific meaning, provisionally, and for want of a better word. By *expressing* I mean, by and large, here and hereafter, *representing an entity's state of mind*, other than a thought, and irrespective of the entity's deliberate intent.

## IV

The idea that goodness and beauty are identical can be presented in two ways from yet another angle. One can argue that both notions differ from value, as their superordinate notion, by the same generic difference (which makes them identical with each other but not identical with value); or that both notions differ from value in no way, which would imply that all three notions are identical in substance (at least the objective substance). This last-named view is propounded herein. I am going to show that various types of formulations employed as tools to define *goodness* and *beauty* as separate from each other by identifying certain objective qualities which distinguish them from value, fail, and that, by virtue of their objective substance, *goodness* is, quite simply, a value, and *beauty* is, quite simply, a value, too. In doing that I have to rely on reasoning of little demonstrative power: reasoning by elimination, with no chance of exhausting all potential alternatives. As a matter of principle I should be obliged to examine any and all ponderable formulas that are suitable for discussion and I should have to prove that all, every one of them, fail to yield a result. This is naturally unfeasible; moreover, for clarity of presentation, in this written reasoning I even have to omit certain points that may be quite significant in mental processes. Even so I suppose this reasoning by elimination can be of use, because the narrow range of concepts suitable for consideration and the probably limited number of possible combinations imply that elimination even of a few of them may be a worthwhile effort. This negative argument of mine is not my final word; in what follows I am going to propose an introductory formula of distinguishing *goodness* and *beauty* by virtue of subjective qualities; the complete reasoning will thus involve three stages: – a preliminary statement of proximity of the two notions after purging them from various admixtures; – the present elimination; – and my own proposal, which, if found to be congruent with common intuition and easy to apply in philosophical analysis, would of course be the most valuable contribution. For the time being, let us go back to our elimination.

If you try to indicate an objective difference, based on value as defined herein, between *goodness* and *beauty*, you seem to have three possibilities. For one, you can take it that *good* means as much as *valuable in such and such way*, *valuable in one way*, while *beautiful* means as much as *valuable otherwise*, *valuable in some other way*, so both terms would be related to the term *valuable* the way, say, the terms *red* and *green* are related to the term *coloured*; whereupon you would have to indicate the generic difference of the two terms in relation to the superior notion *valuable*. Another possibility is to assume that either one of the terms (*beautiful* or *good*), or both (*beautiful* and *good*) would mean as much as *valuable and more*, so, in the latter of the two cases mentioned, their relation to the term *valuable* would be such as the relation of some other term, say, *snow-like*, used in the sense *white and cold*, and the term *lilac*, used in the sense *white and immaculate*, to the term *white*; whereupon you would have to indicate another component, in addition to value, of substance of the terms in question. Should any such additional component be comprised at least in one of the two terms, the other term

would, accordingly, overlap with the term *valuable*. This is a type of distinction I proceed to consider at some detail in the positive part of this essay, with a view to the addition of *subjective*; implications of objective nature are deliberately left aside here, which is basically the gap in the written version I have just mentioned. I leave out that particular stage of discussion because it is pretty complex and would boil down to refuting propositions most readers would deem unreal anyway. I am therefore going to deal with the first and third methods only. A third method, a very conciliatory one, will be to assume that *beautiful* is used in the sense of *valuable* when one talks of one category of things, and in the sense of *good* when one talks of some other category; accordingly, this means the two terms are taken to be basically identical and *beauty* and *goodness* are as though the same thing existing in different sets, the way the same thing used to be referred to as *sweet bay* in culinary recipes and *laurel* adorning Caesar's brow. Now I think the difference we are looking for cannot be found in any of the three paths of reasoning mentioned here; the reasoning applicable in the first and third methods runs as follows.

In the meaning in which the term value is used here, the actual generic difference within the notion of value can be interpreted in two ways. It can, first, be taken to mean that *good* would be a thing having a quality of valuable in some sense (say, relative), and *beautiful* would be a thing having a quality of valuable in some other sense (say, absolute). That could be parried by getting back on the grounds of substance and trying to show that that criterion fails and that, for instance – to keep to the above-quoted example – in actual practice absolute as well as relative qualities are value-generating. What is ultimately important here is the argument, which I am not in a position to elaborate on because it would entail just too long a discussion, that for formal reasons one has to assume that there is *really* just *one* value-generating quality, and that it is not right to seek axiological plurality as the final word. The other possible difference would be the difference in kinds of meaning of *should-ness*, i.e. in the sense of implicit obligation, whereby a thing is *good* when it meets requirements of a variation of implicit obligation to be such and such, and a thing is *beautiful* when it meets requirements of another variation of the same implicit obligation. But in that case it would be necessary to *name* the two variations, even while everything seems to support the fact that such *should-ness*, or implicit obligation, never occurs in any variation at all. The term *should* has of course several meanings (more precisely, it is used in several different ways), but *should* in the axiological sense (the only meaning in which the noun obligation is also used) exists in variations only in reference to someone's obligation *to behave* in such or other manner. There, indeed, one can discern a *potential* obligation to do anything likely to make the world more valuable, on the one hand, and, on the other, a specific *duty* or *calling* delimited by a person's qualifications and situation in life. However, no implicit obligation to be such and such when related to things can be discerned there. One lamp may burn in such and such way, say in red, another in some other colour, for instance in green, but that is not to say that one thing *should* be such and such according to one kind of obligation and the other thing such

and such according to another kind of obligation. Implicit obligation does not even have degrees; so should someone argue that one thing should *very* and another only *a little* they would err either way.

Leaving aside concepts we may come across in a discussion of the latter of the two methods let me proceed to the last one, which is to distinguish things by virtue of category. This puts us before two closely related concepts: one saying that beauty is the value of things sensuous, while goodness is the value of things non-sensuous; the other being that beauty is the value of appearance, while goodness is the value of the thing itself. The former, superficial, theory crumbles instantly given the initial observation that non-sensuous things obviously used to be beautiful as well. The latter, more subtle, theory is wrong too. If we are to take *appearance* to denote what is available to the senses in a thing, the moment we have to recognise certain non-sensuous things as beautiful beauty cannot be a predicate of appearance alone. If, in a broader sense, we call *appearance* what in a thing is available to immediate observation – which is not necessarily effected through the senses – then beautiful could be neither mental dispositions (like what are called *virtues*) nor characters; indeed, nobody would be in a position to pronounce any aesthetical judgment at all about any part of someone's else thinking. And yet dispositions and characters *may* be beautiful, and we do we not judge aesthetically other people's thinking every minute? I do not even mention the insurmountable difficulties that the concept of *appearance* would bring about in cases of productions such as mathematical theorems or reasoning.

Aside from that, now and then you can hear someone contend that *goodness* is a value of human souls, characters, desires or acts, whereas beauty would be a value of all other things (sensuous or non-sensuous). Yet the moment one finds that human souls, characters, desires or acts are sometimes not only good but beautiful as well, that particular distinction turns out untenable.

## V

In effect, I have to take it that on the grounds of the term value as defined here no objective difference can be identified either between *beauty* and *goodness* or between the two terms and value. If so, then could it be that *beautiful* and *good* are both between themselves and in relation to the very term *valuable* merely parasitic synonyms of which at least one could be dropped from language at no cost? That would be the case if the two terms were completely the same. However, there is still a subjective factor at play, specifically our own attitude towards a value when we call it *beauty* or *goodness*. Having agreed with Lipps as to the idea as such of objective sameness, and having parted with him in delving into the interpretation thereof, we now find ourselves again in agreement with him as, after stating that the two notions are identical objectively, he points out, *what differs the two things from each other is the way they are being considered (was sie beide scheidet, ist die Weise der Betrachtung*<sup>1</sup>). I should perhaps venture putting it more

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<sup>1</sup> Archiv, l.c.

generally, the way they are being *referred to*, or *perceived*. The evaluative attitude is admittedly one, when having evaluated something we pronounce it *good* or *beautiful*; yet the taking of an evaluative attitude may be accompanied by such or other extra mental processes, and depending on what those may be we formulate our judgement by the word *good* or by the word *beautiful*.

It seems relatively easy to name what exactly such processes are, yet it is certainly difficult to put forward a formula such that would hold for each and all cases other than with the farthest-going reservations and in a manner entirely out of tune with either of the two terms. Similarly as in so many other terms in which the subjective factor is disclosed just marginally, so to say, and uncontrolled, the two terms too are fluid, variable, so all we can do is to list up several closely related, yet still different, ways in which they are commonly used. This is nothing to worry about, for it is the variability of those notions, as of so many other ones, that is a condition of their practical usefulness.

Apparently then, we call a thing *beautiful* primarily when we consider it valuable and when at the same time, obviously aware of its value, we *contemplate* or *contemplatively experience* that thing. By *contemplation* I mean a specific type of sustained observation, one in which we no longer penetrate the watched thing for exploration thereof but keep aware of all its elements and qualities recognised before; as for any other quality commonly attributed to contemplation, I am inclined to link them, in my terminology, either as incomplete non-commitment – to the evaluative attitude, or as enrapture and losing oneself in the thing – to certain forms or levels of contemplation only. *Experiencing contemplation*, means reliving all those emotional states of mind that appear and grow in us as we are contemplating the thing and *owing to* the circumstance that we that are contemplating it. Use of the word *beautiful* is to do with these two processes; the further up we move on the scale from ordinary prolonged observation to contemplation to contemplative experience and its apex, the more forcefully does this word impose itself on us in the stead of the off-hand substantive term *valuable*<sup>1</sup>. The word *beautiful* then has exactly the same meaning as *valuable*, but at the same time it *expresses*<sup>2</sup> my act of contemplation, or contemplative experience; it fulfils, next to its semantic function, a certain lyrical expressive function, and such lyrical expression of the contemplative status of my spirit often finds its musical accompaniment in the intonation with which we utter the word. All of that, however, is but one instance only of use of our term, which marks the point of departure for several further uses. Who has come to apprehend the expressive function of the word may thereafter want to use it deliberately, to *emphasise* – truly or not – that he is contemplating or experiencing contemplatively; a statement like *this is beautiful* is then *interpreted* to mean *this is valuable and I am contemplating it or experiencing it contemplatively*. A further case of use of the word *beautiful* to describe a thing I am not contemplating right now but have contemplated before and am now recollecting that

<sup>1</sup> This is one of the reasons for which I insist on using the term *beautiful* in the sense of *aesthetically valuable*; the implicit subjective element is significant for the aesthetical perception of value.

<sup>2</sup> *Expresses* in the sense indicated before.

contemplation; for instance, when I hear someone today declaring that Venus of Milo, which I saw years back in Paris, is *beautiful*. Even further up there is a stage where I call *beautiful* a thing I neither am contemplating now, nor ever have contemplated before, but contemplation whereof in the future, or just as a possibility, I anticipate in my mind; say, in exclaiming, *how many things there are in the world still unknown and beautiful!* If you like to put it all in one brief formula you can comprise all these cases as follows: I call a valuable thing beautiful when I am contemplating it or experiencing it contemplatively directly or in recollection or in anticipation. There is one more instance thereof which does not fit in this formula. For example, an aesthetician now and then using the word *beautiful* indifferently and perhaps technically thinks of the thing he is referring to simply as of a thing *potentially* liable for contemplation; beautiful then means as much as *valuable*, and *expresses* a certain general awareness, rather than a thought-out judgement, that the thing can be contemplated. I do not see though how *beautiful* could ever have denoted anything close to *valuable and contemplated by someone*, that someone being other than the speaker himself.

The discipline that deals with the study of beauty is aesthetics; that particular domain of axiology which deals, from the subjective angle, with contemplation and contemplative experience of things of value where the beholder is aware of the value, and, in the objective perspective, with things of value visibly susceptible of contemplation or indeed created with the express purpose to be contemplated.

## VI

Symmetry and, in a sense, tradition, may make us now anticipate that since we have linked *beauty* with contemplation we are now going to link *goodness* to will, volition. This is indeed what we are going to do: it is fair to say, in a certain very general sense, that we call a valuable thing *good* when we consider it a thing we want, an object we desire. Yet *wanting* a value is much less definite a notion than contemplation thereof, so it is this notion of *will* we need first to agree about its meaning.

Let us start with a principal observation. If a language does have a separate term, *beautiful*, to denote things of value that are, or can be, contemplated, then perhaps that is so only because, for some reason – which cannot afford to discuss at this point – contemplation is one of natural and non-random attitudes human beings take towards a thing of value. We neither create, nor do we feel we need to create, any separate term for a thing that is, say, *valuable and situated between the 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> parallel north*, because situation between the 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> parallel north is, in relation to value, but a fortuitous circumstance. So if *good* is to mean anything like *valuable and desired*, then it implies a desire to have it in relation with its value, and non-fortuitous too. So *wanting* cannot be taken here to mean the same as *desire* in the sense of *wanting to own, to possess, or wanting to use it for a practical purpose*, because a circumstance that someone wants to have a thing for their own, or to use it for a practical purpose, is, in relation to the value of the thing

in the axiological sense<sup>1</sup> – i.e. to that it is the way it should be – a circumstance equally fortuitous as geographic altitude. The word *to own* is occasionally used not so much in the sense of *to possess* or *to use for a practical purpose* but where a possible shade of meaning is *to absorb contemplation*, which perhaps seems to mean just *to experience fully by contemplation*. If I happen to call a thing *good* in that specific relation, then it is a case of either or: I describe it either as *valuable*, at the same time expressing my desire to experience it contemplatively, or I describe it only, namely as *valuable and such as I want to experience by contemplation*. In such perception – which is perhaps most common in mystic streams of thinking – *goodness* becomes something secondary and lowly in relation to beauty, for if *beauty* is a value I experience contemplatively, and *goodness* is a value I *want* experience contemplatively, then it is justifiable to say, *goodness is a value which I only want to become beauty to me*, or downright, *goodness, is beauty as the object of my desire*<sup>2</sup>. I see no compelling reason why the term *good* should not be used in this sense, among other meanings, as well – if there was no other meaning, a more common and more natural one, the term should perhaps have to be reserved for everyday use in the argot of moralists and axiologists.

The first, most natural and immediate relation between value and wanting is this: If – as the conception of value presented here inextricably demands – it is true that certain things *should be such and such*, then it is equally true (this proposition, in axiology, has the strength of axiom and is a basis of its normative role) that an entity capable of apprehending this proposition should, if endowed with the capacity of volition, *want* those certain things to be such and such. A valuable thing is thus not only a thing *such as it should be* but always also a thing *such as a thinking entity endowed with the capacity of volition should want it to be*; except that this latter of the two qualities, as derivative, does not have to be quoted when defining value. This latter of the two qualities of a valuable thing is not explicitly present in the mind when we say the thing is *valuable*, the way that when we say *the sea* we do not explicitly keep in the mind the quality that it is roaring; instead, we fix attention on that particular quality and draw the attention of others to it, or we *emphasise* it the moment we call the thing *good*. That is much like the case of Homer speaking of the sea, when instead of saying, simply, θαλάσση, he says πολύφλοισβος θαλάσση, with the difference that, rather than

<sup>1</sup> *Value in the axiological sense* does sound oddly like a tautology. Yet the term *value* seems to have two, if not equal-footed then at least equally often used, meanings. One is the axiological meaning, the more important one of the two; to avoid a semblance of tautology one can call it *timological* (Laird, *The idea of Value*, 1929, pp. 321–322 & passim). The other meaning is such as is implied when one talks of economic, utilitarian, desirable and similar *values*. In the axiological meaning, *value* is something that was tentatively rendered by *dignity* (*dignitas* as early as in Seneca). Laird (*op. cit.*), eventually, discards the ambiguous term *perfection* to propose instead *excellence*; in Polish, the term is perhaps best rendered by *szacowność*. In the other meaning – which Laird calls *elective* – *value* is Seneca's *pretium*. The two meanings are related to each other in no way; *value* as *pretium* and *value* as *dignitas*, are homonyms.

<sup>2</sup> That is, e.g. the case in Plotinus' monumental proposition (*Enn.* I, 6, 7): Ἔστι γὰρ τῷ μὲν μήπω ἰδόντι ὀρέγεσθαι ὡς ἀγαθοῦ· τῷ δὲ ἰδόντι ὑπάρχει ἐπὶ καλῷ ἀγασθαί. I am quoting this sentence in acknowledgement of my indebtedness, for it was this sentence that gave a major impulse to the present reflections.

inserting a new word we substitute another, more complicated, word for the original yet which fulfils both functions all by itself. We are adding no *new* quality to the substance described by the term *valuable*, like – as when assuming that the sea always roars and that we know that – πολύφλοισβος adds nothing to the substance of the noun θαλάσση. So let us not get trapped to say that *good* means as much as *valuable and such as a thinking entity endowed with the capacity of volition should want it to be*. Not so. The difference between *good* and *valuable* is still subjective here; with *good* meaning as much as *valuable* and *expressing* the fixing of attention on the quality here discussed.

This particular use of the term, the most important of all uses in axiology, should somehow be distinguished from the one we have just examined: I am happy with the description *deontological* for it. Just as with the term *beautiful*, further shades of meaning right away present themselves in this case too. I can in particular fix attention on the fact that this is what I should want, but I can actually want that something, and not fortuitously but precisely *because* I should; accordingly, *good*, while still meaning as much as *valuable*, may this time *express* that particular want of mine. Lastly (in analogy to the latter use of the term *beautiful*) *good* may mean as much as *valuable and such as I, out of my implicit sense of obligation, want it to be*. Both these shades of meaning are actually less significant than the first one. Nor does it seem likely that in this case there could be any question (in analogy to contemplation) of my wanting that in the past or in the future; what is certain is that *good* will *never* mean anything like *valuable and such as* one may *want it to be*. One can reasonably (yet with little likelihood) doubt that all valuable things may be contemplated; but I can always *want* a thing to be such as it should be, even while I cannot always actively seek to get that to happen.

The term *good* in the deontological sense is in its right place in ethics, the discipline founded on axiology which, in dealing with the question *how should be behave?*, studies value-generating qualities with a view to precepts that may follow from familiarity with such qualities and guide us to behave in one way or another. The term *valuable*, in turn, is suitable primarily when, simply, I appreciate something in a positive way, that is, when I pronounce something to be *such as it should be* and say or express nothing else beyond that; when, in a word, my attitude is purely an appreciative attitude.

*transl. by Z. Nierada*