2.3 What is it like to recognize values? (The hard problem of value 2)

Journal Item

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Abstract: This article responds to three concerns regarding the viability of Nietzsche's conception of value creation. Section I examines the claim that philosophy is unlikely to contribute to the creation of value. Section II argues that some puzzles regarding Nietzsche's allegedly highest value of life-affirmation may require for a solution two different conceptions of life-affirmation: basic life-affirmation$_b$ and Life-affirmation^e *par excellence*, which is both qualitatively different and based on a theoretically more demanding conception of life. Section three proposes that Nietzsche's perspectivist method, which distinguishes between perspectival "knowing" and perspectival "objective" *knowledge* in GM III 12, may usefully be applied to the knowledge and recognition of differences in value perspectives and help improve our value practices.

Keywords: value creation, affirmation of life, perspectivism, "hard problem of value".

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Beitrag behandelt drei Bedenken bezüglich der Realisierbarkeit von Nietzsches Konzeption des Werteschaffens. Teil I behandelt die Annahme, dass ein Beitrag der Philosophie das Werteschaffen betreffend unwahrscheinlich ist. Teil II argumentiert, dass es zur Lösung einiger Probleme mit Nietzsches angeblich höchstem Wert der Lebensbejahung der Einführung zweier unterschiedlicher Konzeptionen von Lebensbejahung bedarf: einfacher Lebensbejahung$_b$ und Lebensbejahung$_e$ *par excellence*, die qualitativ verschieden ist und einen theoretisch komplexeren Lebensbegriff zur Voraussetzung hat. Teil III schlägt vor, Nietzsches perspektivistische Methode, die in GM III 12 perspektivisches ‚Erkennen' von perspektivischer ‚objektiver' Erkenntnis unterscheidet, auf die Erkenntnis und Anerkennung unterschiedlicher Werteperspektiven anzuwenden, mit dem Ziel, unsere Werte-Praxis zu verfeinern.

Schlagwörter: Werte schaffen, Lebensbejahung, Perspektivismus, "hartes Werteproblem".

In this article I will respond to some of the concerns raised by contributors to the value controversy and attempt to contribute further to what I previously called in 1.3 the hard problem of value. I fully agree with 1.1 [Henning Ottmann]'s call for philosophy's humility regarding the creation of first-order values.

In section 1, I will give some reasons why I think, *pace* 1.1, that the role of the philosopher – as participant in the interdisciplinary research programme Nietzsche envisaged – may be significant to understanding (the nature of) values, the conditions that govern their creation, and the possibilities of their coexistence.

In his article *Nietzsche's Highest Value (Affirmation of Life) and its Limits* 1.6 [James Porter] points out an important ambiguity in Nietzsche's value of life-affirmation. In Section 2 I will argue that some of the problems regarding the standing of Nietzsche's allegedly highest value (affirmation of life) may be resolved if we attribute to Nietzsche two different conceptions of life-affirmation, one basic and one theoretically more demanding.

Finally, prompted by 1.7 [Vanessa Lemm]'s analysis of Nietzsche's plant metaphors and 1.9 [Maudemarie Clark]'s *On Creating Values*, I will briefly return to what I previously called the 'hard problem of value' concerning the coexistence of realist and non-realist conceptions of value. I suggest that there may be further epistemic resources for improving our value practices to be found in Nietzsche's perspectivist proposal of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*), which he distinguishes in GM III 12 from mere perspectival "knowing" (*perspektivisches "Erkennen"*).

1 Philosophers as creators of values?

1.1 [Henning Ottmann] cautions that today answers to questions of the 'which values … ?'-kind, what I take as will become clear to be questions regarding first-order values, are unlikely to come from philosophers (p. 5). Such guidance is more likely to come from religion(s) and 'lived life' (*gelebtes Leben*) rather than philosophical reflection. In order to determine which role, if any, philosophers (in Nietzsche's non-pejorative understanding of the term[1]) may play, it may be necessary to distinguish between a first-order and a second-order concept of value. When Nietzsche asks the question regarding *the* (second-order) *value* of previous, current, and future (first-order) *values*, e.g. in GM III 17, he does not actually propose not new first-order values but instead describes something close to a method of enquiry. He first identifies a set of (first-order) values (this I think aligns with 1.9 [Maudemarie Clark]'s 'descriptive values') and then comes up with an explanatory hypothesis in which ways certain values contribute to a specific, overall highest good for a specific life (e.g. Nachlass 1884, 26[55], KSA 11.162). The (second-order) value *of* these values he identifies with 'a positive feeling', or pro-attitude, engendered by the set of (first-order) values. Highest goods are always relational and both type- and token-dependent, i.e. x is a good always only for a particular token z of a type y, they nevertheless follow, and here Nietzsche himself generalizes heuristically, what he calls a logic of feeling (*Logik des Gefühls*) (GM

1 Nietzsche very often uses the term philosopher pejoratively. 1.1 [Henning Ottmann] rightly worries about (our) disciplinary overconfidence and may well be correct, in the spirit of 1.2 [Martin Saar] that new (first-order) values are unlikely to be created by today's philosophers. But I think we should be cautious not to misapply Nietzsche's idea and ideal of the 'value-creating philosopher' – a type of thinker who he saw at considerable distance to the lectern (cf. SE 8).

III 17). For example, values that contribute to an increase of *Leidlosigkeit* (absence of suffering) engender a pro-attitude in the one who suffers. The token individual of a psychological type thus evaluates – "feels" – the absence of any kind of suffering or resistance as positive ("als das Positive selbst empfunden"). While certain values may, for example, increase feelings of self-efficacy and autonomy for some psychological types, such values are not universalizable.[2] GM III 17 thus opens with an invective against those who prescribe universalization. It calls for "practitioners" of values who no longer prescribe universal remedies to alleviate merely the symptoms of a sickness (the same, "ascetic" remedy for all types and tokens) but who instead are able to first identify and then perhaps target what Nietzsche sees as the underlying causes of the ailment.

The "medical history" Nietzsche constructs in GM hypothesizes that the real causes behind the symptoms, to which the set of ascetic values are merely one (problematic) treatment, have to do with an initial violation and distortion, due to socialization and internalization of drives, of basic psychological needs. According to the explanatory hypothesis that Nietzsche attempted to work out in his later writings, the basic psychological needs of the human animal are a genuine (as opposed to ascetic) sense of self-efficacy, a genuine feeling of autonomy, as well as living, agonistic relationships with itself and others. Thus, rather than proposing new, structurally similar, first-order values that replace ascetic values,[3] Nietzsche issues a call to carry out research into the human animals' psychological needs. In the famous remark at the end of GM's first essay he proposes an interdisciplinary, *both* philosophical *and* empirical research programme for the study of values as expressions of physiological and psychological needs with the goal to better understand human flourishing and well-being.

Empirical psychology has to date done a great deal of comparative work and presently assumes that "the basic psychological needs are competence, autonomy, and relatedness," which it considers, across different cultural expressions, as "necessary and sufficient to promote human growth and functioning."[4] In this body of re-

2 On a reading of Nietzsche's will to power as self-efficacy based on a phenomenology of overcoming various kinds of resistance, and the concomitant feeling of freedom and autonomy, see Manuel Dries, The Feeling of Doing. Nietzsche on Agent Causation, in: Nietzscheforschung 20 (2013), pp. 235–247.

3 I concur with 1.2 [Martin Saar]'s assessment that Nietzsche is on the whole much better at examining critically the falsely reductive values that aim at dominance and pretend to offer a new set of absolute, ahistorical, universal values.

4 Marylène Gagné / Edward L. Deci, The History of Self-Determination Theory in Psychology and Management, in: The Oxford Handbook of Work Engagement, Motivation, and Self-Determination Theory, Oxford 2014, p. 4. Their results are based on research by E. L. Deci / R. M. Ryan, The empirical exploration of intrinsic motivational processes, in: L. Berkowitz (ed.), Advances in experimental social psychology 13 (New York 1980), pp. 39–80; Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior, New York 1985; The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior, in: Psychological Inquiry 11 (2000), pp. 227–268; Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life domains, in: Canadian Psychology 49 (2007), pp. 14–23.

search, competence is (currently) defined roughly as genuine sense of proficiency and concomitant feeling of effectiveness. Autonomy is (currently) defined as engagement in activities that express who one is and what one values. And, finally, relatedness is (currently) defined as feelings of relatedness and interdependence with others or a group. Empirical psychology is, thus far, corroborating Nietzsche's hypotheses about some set, or sets, of basic needs the understanding of which may contribute to our improved understanding of different moralities and value systems more generally. A lot of the work that has been carried out by the empirical sciences and in particular empirical psychology falls squarely within the remit of Nietzsche's interdisciplinary research project of human values and human flourishing.[5]

Thus, while today's (academic) philosophers are certainly no legislators of new first-order values, Nietzsche certainly had a vision for what kind of broad, conceptual and empirical, research he thought was required in order to find better answers to questions such as 'Which values should we teach our children?'. System of values, this is the guiding hypothesis, could be evaluated better if the requisites for life-affirmation, i.e. physiological and psychological flourishing for individuals of different types, were better understood. While Nietzsche comes up with a wealth of observations from which he infers some basic underlying needs, he was well aware that rather than presenting answers he was formulating a research programme that would have to involve many different sciences.[6]

And yet, does it make sense for Nietzsche to argue that a set of values may be good (and goods or ends) for a particular form of life, and yet fall short of life-affirmation *par excellence* as he seems to claim? It is this set of question that brings me to the second, closely related issue I wish to address: is there a major ambiguity in Nietzsche's value of life-affirmation that robs it of its explanatory significance? It is precisely Nietzsche's allegedly highest value, life-affirmation, that 1.6 [James Porter] challenges.

2 Is it possible to affirm life improperly?

In nuce, 1.6's argument goes something like this: (1) Life-affirmation is a quality that is, for Nietzsche, an irrefrangible good.[7] (2) Any basic act of will, if successful, is an

5 As is well known, Nietzsche often refers to himself as the first psychologist philosopher: "Wer war überhaupt vor mir unter den Philosophen Psycholog und nicht vielmehr dessen Gegensatz „höherer Schwindler", „Idealist"? Es gab vor mir noch gar keine Psychologie." (EH Destiny 6)

6 Nietzsche frequently criticizes virtues as means to different ends, e.g. for increasing power, for different possessors (cf. Nachlass 1888, 14[199], KSA 13.382 f.). His concept of value thus allows taking up unfamiliar perspectives on first-order goods such as virtues.

7 1.6 [James Porter], p. 75: "essential and ineliminable property of life".

instance of life-affirmation.[8] It follows that (3) any act of will is life-affirming, a good, and therefore valuable.[9] From this it is possible to arrive at some disconcerting inferences that threaten the coherence of Nietzsche's highest value such as "affirmation is something about which we can never, so to speak, go wrong whenever we feel it" (1.6, p. 11). Or the nihilist, when he denies life (through acts of will), actually affirms life. Ultimately, 1.6 [James Porter] concludes, that "the denial of life is self-refuting." (p. 76) If any willing is value creation qua basic life-affirmation, then any psycho-physiological type, regardless of her drives and affective orientations constantly instantiates and creates, in each and every act of will, Nietzsche's highest value. If this was the case, on what basis could we make sense of Nietzsche's evaluations of specific types as, e.g. lower or higher, active or reactive?

1.6 [James Porter]'s argument is compelling and all I wish to do here is to offer some possible avenues for responses. As already hinted at in 1.3, it might be necessary to introduce, in addition to the concept of "pure" or basic life-affirmation (life-affirmation$_b$), a second concept, let's call it Life-affirmation *par excellence* (Life-affirmation^e). If Life-affirmation^e were, for example, based on a different conception of Life, then the above difficulty may disappear. If we assume that Nietzsche operates with a normative conception of Life (that promotes, according to his, i.e. our current best interdisciplinary research, human growth and functioning to a higher degree) that provides him, for example, with some criteria such as 'agonistic complexity' that 'aims at increasing both diversity and strength', then life-affirmation$_b$, though clearly a necessary condition, would fall short and could be differentiated from Life-affirmation^e.[10]

There is evidence that Nietzsche distinguishes between life-affirmation$_b$ and Life-affirmation^e. For example, in Nachlass 1884, 26[55], KSA 11.162, Nietzsche argues that any act of will is a *determinate* or specific affirmation of a *specific* kind of life: "Wenn man nicht einen bestimmten Standpunkt hat, ist über den Werth von keinem Dinge zu reden: d. h. eine *bestimmte* [my emphasis] B e j a h u n g eines *bestimmten* [my emphasis] Lebens ist die Voraussetzung jedes S c h ä t z e n s." But in addition to determinate – or perspectival – life-affirmation, he frequently refers to other, higher, or even highest kinds of affirmation that he discusses, for example, in EH, GT 2, and in EH, Z 1, with reference to the thought experiment of eternal recurrence.

When Nietzsche uses in GM I 11 the adjective 'tame' (*zahm*) to describe the reactive subject that he criticizes despite satisfying the criterion of life-affirmation$_b$, it becomes clear that Life-affirmation^e differs not only with regard to a more complex

8 1.6 [James Porter], p. 69: basic affirmation is defined as the "pleasurable exercise of an essential capacity". "Willing confers value just by the very fact of willing". And "affirmation is self-certifying and self-reinforcing".

9 1.6 [James Porter], p. 69: "*any* act of will is as "valuable" as any other. This is affirmation at its purest."

10 See my paper 1.3, p. 37 and footnote 22.

conception of Life, it seems to differ also in quality, in its 'what-it-is-likeness': it is no longer simply a *Lust-Gefühl*, a feeling of pleasure due to an increase of self-efficacy, the feeling of freedom or power.[11] Life-affirmation[e] may contain also the qualitative feel of pain of which the tame or "decadent" man of GM I 11 knows little: "Es wird ein höchster Zustand von Bejahung des Daseins concipirt, aus dem auch der höchste Schmerz nicht abgerechnet werden kann" (Nachlass 1888, 17[3]3, KSA 13.522) And, finally, for the person who can respond affirmatively to the thought experiment of eternal recurrence, affirmation of Life *par excellence* requires, in the formulation of GS 341, facing up to *the heaviest burden* in every single choice of action ("die Frage bei Allem und Jedem „willst du diess noch einmal und noch unzählige Male?" würde als das grösste Schwergewicht auf deinem Handeln liegen!").[12] So it seems that just as on, for example, a Frankfurtian account of willing first-order desires are a necessary condition, but insufficient for what we may call willing *proper*,[13] basic acts of will, while necessary, fall short of Life-affirmation[e]. As I have tried to show, the latter may be regarded as premised on a more complex, theoretical conception of Life and flourishing, and it may be said to also differ qualitatively from basic affirmation.

While this may help to address some of our worries, the normative standing of Nietzsche's conception of affirmation remains elusive. However, Nietzsche is an optimist here. He predicts that the above-mentioned interdisciplinary research programme into the value of specific values for specific individuals or types may provide evidence that contributes to our understanding of different kinds of flourishing, and to what sort of values may be better or worse in light of these. Any resulting conception of flourishing or Life-affirmation[e] would always be (a) informed by the results of the philosophical *and* empirical interdisciplinary research programme, and (b) if we follow our best scientific practices, remains always open to revision.

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11 On the relationship between Nietzsche's conception of freedom and will to power, see Manuel Dries, Freedom, Resistance, Agency, in: Manuel Dries / Peter J. E. Kail (eds.), Nietzsche on Mind and Nature, Oxford 2015 (forthcoming).

12 See also Nachlass 1888, 20[133], KSA 13.571: "dieses höchste Hinderniß, / diesen Gedanken der Gedanken, / wer schuf ihn sich! / Das Leben selber schuf sich / sein höchstes Hinderniß: / über seinen Gedanken selber springt es nunmehr hinweg". On a reading of eternal recurrence as a thought experiment designed to maximize resistance to, and inhibit, decision-making that favours hedonistic, short-term goals over more demanding and more complex long-term goals, see Manuel Dries, Decision-Making under Maximal Resistance, in: Daniel Came (ed.), Nietzsche on Morality and the Affirmation of Life, Oxford (forthcoming).

13 For example, in Frankfurt's account of willing, that I do not intend to endorse here, first-order desires are an enabling condition for action. However, action based on basic or first-order desires is a mark of the 'wanton' who lacks the ability to have second-order desires and make second- or higher-order desires her volitions.

3 Recognizing values – perspectival 'knowing' vs knowledge of values

I would like to end with a brief comment on the limits of the normative conclusions we may derive from Nietzsche's naturalizing analogy between the "creative" life of plants and the creative value practices of human beings.[14] Nietzsche's frequent attempts to "retranslate man back into nature" form part of his research programme, discussed above, to study human beings and human cultural phenomena (among them moralities) both philosophically and empirically. And as I (among many) have argued elsewhere, this research programme is strongly motivated by the problem of value nihilism: when the hitherto "highest values devalue themselves", essential motivational requirements for life-affirmative[e] willing and acting are no longer fulfilled and flourishing is under threat. Nietzsche's philosophical attempts to overcome nihilism include a naturalizing strategy with the goal to reclaim values, and possibly their creation, from a supernatural realm. His own metaphysical assumptions (developed largely in the notebooks) reject both the metaphysical staticism and the separatism that he sees (correctly) as deeply entrenched.[15] Many of his observations and arguments presuppose an adualistic, continuum model that admits drawing a number of functional analogies between inorganic, organic, animal, human, and cultural 'interpretive' processes. The strategy's goal is for both agents and values to lose their supernatural, mysterious properties. 'Knowing', Nietzsche can now claim, cannot and should no longer be seen as separate and separable from drives and affective orientations. Seeing and 'knowing' (Nietzsche's inverted commas) are never value-neutral and are always *from* an agential perspective. But, pace 1.7 [Vanessa Lemm], Nietzsche is not only critical of a previous supernaturalizing value creation, in many of his later remarks he shows that he is equally critical of any reductive naturalizations, what we may call the 'plant-logic' of value creation. In fact, he criticizes most value systems precisely as based on a falsifying *qua* reductive perspective (*Optik*), which tries to conserve this specific value system behind the protective shield of a metaphysical apparatus that reinforces their alleged objective authority. In AC 9 he contends:

> Man macht bei sich eine Moral, eine Tugend, eine Heiligkeit aus dieser fehlerhaften Optik zu allen Dingen, man knüpft das g u t e Gewissen an das F a l s c h - sehen, – man fordert, dass keine a n d r e Art Optik mehr Werth haben dürfe, nachdem man die eigne mit den Namen „Gott" „Erlösung" „Ewigkeit" sakrosankt gemacht hat.

14 Based on passages such as Nachlass 1883, 7[107], KSA 10.278, 1.7 [Vanessa Lemm] argues that "plants as much as animals and humans are value creating beings and what we find at the heart of Nietzsche's conception of life is precisely the power to create values" (p. 84).

15 Nietzsche rejects many traditional metaphysical assumptions. On a recent analysis of Nietzsche's own metaphysical assumptions, see Galen Strawson, Nietzsche's Metaphysics?, in: Dries / Kail (eds.), Nietzsche on Mind and Nature (forthcoming).

However, if we look carefully, GM III 12 argues not simply (a) for perspectival "knowing" („*Erkennen*") (Nietzsche's quotation marks), and (b) a new kind of "objectivity" (again these are Nietzsche's) that demands a comprehensive multiplying of affective perspectives. GM III 12 actually argues for knowledge, (*Erkenntnis*, Nietzsche uses without inverted commas), that is available only to a knower (*Erkennender*, again without inverted commas), capable to entertain and enter into many different affective perspectives of something that is of value. Such a knower *par excellence* would not only be capable (1) to see one and the same thing through "many eyes." She would also (2) compare and register the difference in value for different affective ways of "knowing" (that are usually blind to their own horizons). And, only then, (3) *know* the "objective" value – different values – of something. Such knowing *par excellence* presupposes affective-reflective capacities that would de-bias against taking any single perspective for more than it is, one particular perspective. Perspectival "knowing", then, is constitutive of but not sufficient for the much more comprehensive, multi-perspectival *knowledge* required for the philosophical and empirical research programme Nietzsche had in mind.

Might there after all be some resources for the hard problem of value in Nietzsche's philosophy?

4 The hard problem of value creation 2

As I have argued previously, Nietzsche's non-realist conception conceives of values no longer as the kinds of things that simply are what they are once and for all, and that retain their motivating force. They require to be reinvented and reaffirmed. We can now add that on a Nietzschean conception, recognizing values requires a *better* knowing that, as we saw, he hinted at in GM III 12. Nietzschean 'better knowing',[16] if it exists, would be able to comprehend "objectively" due to an ability to enter into, and inhabit, and compare many different affective perspectives. It would thereby know the different values (plural) of one and the same thing, for and from different perspectives. 'Better knowing' would be sensitive to the relation-dependence, complexity, and multiple realizability of any value that is only seemingly 'given'.[17]

How would a better knower in the above sense understand, for example, 'the' value of free speech? Is someone who publishes and re-publishes in the name of

16 Nietzschean 'better knowing', if it exists, would be very different from Schopenhauer's conception of 'better knowledge', i.e. knowledge of ideas, e.g. in aesthetic experience.

17 I am very sympathetic to 1.9 |Maudemarie Clark|'s distinction between descriptive and normative values. The normative properties of values$_n$ would not be, for reasons given above, agent neutral. As I argue above and in 1.3, it seems that for Nietzsche they would always be importantly agent-relational, but this would not make them, as Railton shows, relativistic.

free speech offensive cartoons in thrall of a reductive optics that takes free speech for something simpler than it is?[18] Just as those who subsequently react with rage? Does a perspective that accepts something as sacred deserve to be recognized as such and coexist with our secular opposite value optics? A better knower, if she exists, if she was able to enter into, and step out of, and keep in mind, the various different, secular and sacred, affective perspectives, may recognize that there is a hard problem of value. She may recognize also that value creation across the realist-antirealist divide demands a kind of tolerance that Nietzsche thought extremely rare, and hard to achieve for the kinds of things we are.[19]

18 "Redefreiheit. – „Die Wahrheit muss gesagt werden, und wenn die Welt in Stücke gehen sollte!" – so ruft, mit grossem Munde, der grosse Fichte! – Ja! Ja! Aber man müsste sie auch haben! – Aber er meint, Jeder solle seine Meinung sagen, und wenn Alles drunter und drüber gienge." (M 353)
19 "Goethe concipirte einen starken, hochgebildeten, in allen Leiblichkeiten geschickten, sich selbst im Zaume habenden [...] Menschen, [...] der stark genug zu dieser Freiheit ist; den Menschen der Toleranz, nicht aus Schwäche, sondern aus Stärke" (TI, Skirmishes 49).