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Perceiving Facts and Values

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In a memorable passage near the beginning of 'The Moral Philosopher and The Moral Life,' William James asks us to imagine a world in which all our dearest social utopias are realized, and then to imagine that this world is offered to us at the price of one lost soul at the farthest edge of the universe suffering eternal, intense, lonely pain. Then he asks, 'what except a specifical and independent sort of emotion can it be which would make us immediately feel, even though an impulse arose within us to clutch at the happiness so offered, how hideous a thing would be its enjoyment when deliberately accepted as the fruit of such a bargain.'[1]

I find this passage enormously interesting for a variety of reasons. We would have an impulse to grasp the utopian world, and that impulse is not inexplicable: we would be happier in such a world than we are now. The impulse is even morally defensible: James tells us later in the essay that, '[t]here is but one unconditional commandment, which is that we should seek incessantly, with fear and trembling, so to vote and to act as to bring about the very largest universe of good that we can see.' (ibid., p. 158) Moreover, he acknowledges that our best ideals cannot be realized in this poor world without trampling some other ideals under foot. The realization of the values of good and sensitive people entails the frustration of the desires and goals of cruel and brutal people. Worse, institutions that are on the whole beneficial will have innocent victims; James mentions monogamous marriage as an example of such an institution. In a functioning democracy, these are frustrations that everyone must take in stride sometimes. So, should we then not grasp that utopia, that world without unemployment, without homelessness, where everyone has access to medical care, where racism and other forms of prejudice and oppression are known only from the history books, etc., etc.? Those commentators who read James as a kind of Utilitarian, must surely believe that James would advocate our grasping that ideal, that he would speak not merely of an impulse to clutch that happiness but of an obligation. But James is not a Utilitarian, and the passage under discussion occurs when James wants to distance himself from the Utilitarians. We have, he

[1] W. James, *The Will to Believe and other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1979), 144.

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says, a capacity for quite specific emotions, capacities that cannot be explained in any simple way as the result of evolutionary selection for the survival of either the individual or the species. He does not mean the capacity for sympathy, though that too would come into play here. Sympathy enables us to vividly imagine the suffering of the lost tortured soul, to feel for it and, indeed, with it. But James means something else; he means a revulsion, an apprehension that to do a certain thing would be 'hideous.' To do what? To opt for the utopia? That is not what he says. To enjoy the utopia? Again, that is not what he says. There is nothing wrong with opting for or enjoying utopia if it can be had at no cost, or at a cost clearly bearable by those who are obliged to bear it, or if one is non-culpably ignorant of the price. What is hideous is 'enjoyment when deliberately accepted as the fruit of such a bargain.'

James claims that certain moral facts are immediately felt by a specific emotion—'a specifical and independent sort of emotion … would make us immediately feel … how hideous …' Something is hideous, or exquisite, or cruel, or generous, and to perceive it as such is to respond with a specific emotion. I have substituted 'perceive' for James's 'feel,' but James used 'feel' in a much wider sense than we do today. In the *Principles of Psychology* he announced that he would use 'feeling' to refer to 'all states of consciousness merely as such,'[2] that it would cover both sensation and thought. Feelings, in other words, can be cognitive; in fact, James suggested that the word 'thought' would be preferable because 'it immediately suggests the omnipresence of cognition (or reference to an object other than the mental state itself) …' (ibid., p. 186) In fact, James uses both 'feeling' and 'thought' and sometimes 'psychosis' as general terms for states of consciousness. So, when James says that a specific emotion makes us feel the hideousness of a certain state of affairs, he is saying something entirely analogous to saying, for example, that a specific sensation makes us feel the blueness of the sky. In both cases there is a 'reference to an object other than the mental state [the emotion, the sensation] itself.' For both cases, I shall use the term 'perceive.'

I do not, however, want to say quite what James says. I find the claim that a specifical emotion *makes* us immediately feel how hideous it would be to do (or experience) a certain thing unclear. What sort of making is this? Is there a causal process that leads from having a certain emotion to the perception of the moral features of the situation, as having light reflected from the sky impinge on the retina might be said to cause us to see a blue sky? That suggestion

[2] W. James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge, MA & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1981, vol. 1), p. 185.

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has a certain initial plausibility. One can easily enough imagine James providing a physiology of moral perception, investigating how the bodily changes that, according to the James-Lange theory, occur when we have a particular emotion are connected to the corresponding moral perception. And one might then ask what, if anything, corresponds in that case to, say, a cut optic nerve in the case of visual perception. But as soon as one asks that question, one sees that the relation between the emotion and the moral perception is not like that between the light impinging on the retina and seeing the sky; it is rather like the relation between having the visual sensation and the perception of the blue sky. But just as it is infelicitous to say that having the visual sensation makes one perceive the blue sky, so it is infelicitous to say that having the emotion makes one perceive the hideousness of the imagined situation. Having the visual sensation amounts to perceiving the blue sky; having the emotion amounts to perceiving the hideousness of the situation.

I shall say more about this in a moment, for I am not interested here in quarrelling with James. I am not even interested in what James thought about perception, moral are otherwise. I am interested in perception. Some years ago I wrote a paper about the role of the imagination in moral perception, and when I discussed that paper with my colleagues, I discovered that at a certain point our conversation came to a standstill because we had quite different conceptions of perception, of plain ordinary sense perception.[3] In this paper, I want to sketch my conception of perception.

There is a second reason for my interest in perception, namely my objection to the fact-value distinction. I have elsewhere argued that facts and values emerge at the end of inquiry on an equal footing: the facts are value-laden, and the values are fact-laden.[4] Others, beginning with Dewey, to whose writings I am indebted beyond anything to which footnotes might testify, have argued in a similar fashion. But since perceptions are the starting points of inquiry, the claim that there is no epistemologically interesting difference between facts and values rests on shaky grounds unless values enter into the beginning of inquiry on an equal footing with facts.

Dewey distinguished between valuing and evaluating, between prizing and appraising; I shall use that distinction without,

[3] R. A. Putnam, '*Imágenes morales e imaginación moral*' ('Moral Images and Moral Imagination'), *Diánoia: Anuario de Filosofia*, **38** (1992), 187–202.

[4] R. A. Putnam, 'Creating Facts and Values', *Philosophy* **60**, No. 232 (April l985), 187–204; and 'Weaving Seamless Webs', *Philosophy* **62**, No. 240 (April 1987), 207–220.

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however, claiming that I am following exactly in his footsteps. A value judgment, a judgment that something is or has a certain value, is the outcome of an evaluation, a process of inquiry; a value we might say is an object-of-evaluation. In contrast, valuing is immediate, it is an enjoying or suffering, a being angry or grateful, feeling afraid or safe, having a Jamesean 'specifical emotion,' etc. It has, as James said, a reference beyond itself; some thing, event, state of affairs, is being enjoyed or suffered, one is angry at someone, some action, some happening, etc. That thing or event, that person or action is valued, is perceived to be good or bad, dangerous or trustworthy, hideous or appealing. We have no word that refers to these objects-of-valuation as distinct from the objects-of-evaluation. We have in ordinary English no word by which we distinguish the objects which we see, hear, taste, etc. from the objects that are known at the end of inquiry, but some philosophers, Dewey among them, have called the former 'percepts,' and Dewey refers to the latter by the term 'object-of-knowledge.' In ordinary English we lack words to mark these differences because the differences one wants to mark are not differences between distinct things or distinct qualities; the same object is a percept at the beginning of an inquiry and an object-of-knowledge at the end; the terms 'object-of-knowledge' and 'percept' mark a difference in epistemological status only. Of course, many objects-of-knowledge have never been percepts (atoms, for example, or the state of the economy), and many percepts are so unproblematic that they prompt no inquiry and, thus, do not become objects-of-knowledge. Part of the thesis of this paper may now be stated in a nutshell: objects-of-valuation are related to objects-of-evaluation as are percepts to objects-of-knowledge.

Cornel West has written, provocatively, of the 'American Evasion of Philosophy,' by which he meant the American rejection of the epistemological problem set to modern philosophy by Descartes.[5] The problem might be stated simply thus: how can we infer the existence and nature of a public and permanent world (an external real world) from our private and fleeting sense-data? To this problem, the only answer seems to be, 'you cannot,' as centuries of failed philosophical attempts have demonstrated. But, of course, that is not an acceptable answer; so generations of philosophers continue to devote themselves to seeking to solve the problem.

It is to my mind the glory of the Pragmatists that all of them, rather than offering vain attempts to solve the problem or accepting the sceptical answer, rejected the problem. They all rejected the

[5] C. West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

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philosophical assumption that our basic data are private sense data. In his brilliant response to Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World,* Dewey subjects Russell's formulation of the problem to a destructive analysis.[6] He shows that any formulation of the problem assumes what it purports to call in question. In calling sense data fleeting, for example, one contrasts them with things that exist at times other than the present, hence one assumes time. More importantly, far from being data, sense data and the various relations among them from which the common sense world is supposed to be inferred, are instead 'the result of an analysis of the usual crude empirical data, and an analysis which is made possible only by a very complex knowledge of the world' that is supposedly called in question. (Dewey, p. 296)

If we do not begin with sense data, where do we begin? That question is ambiguous. It might mean, where do we begin as newborns? Or it may mean, where do we begin as adults , i.e. what are our crude empirical data. The former question is surely legitimate, and psychologists who study neonatal behaviour give us reason to think that infants discriminate more and earlier than we used to think. But to describe their behaviour as discrimination, is to describe it using a concept that has its original application in the behaviour of older children and adults. Alternatively, we might with Dewey offer the hypothesis 'that even the most rudimentary conscious experience contains within itself the element of suggestion or expectation,' from which he concludes that 'the object of conscious experience even with an infant is homogeneous with the world of an adult.' (Dewey, p. 299) Of course, suggestion and expectation are again concepts that have their home in adult experience. Just as we cannot describe sense-data without reference to objects of the commonsense world, so we cannot describe the neonate's experience without reference to the experiences of older children and adults. Thus, we must begin where we are, begin as adults in every day life.

In one sense, to be sure, we begin just where the neonate begins, by interacting with our environment. The key word here is 'interaction'—indeed one might say with some justice that 'interaction' is the key word in Dewey's philosophy. I am not quite prepared to say, as I believe Dewey would, that every experience changes both the experiencer and that which is experienced, that is the rest of the world. The world as a whole is changed, of course, because I am a part of the world. But it seems to me that when I enjoy a sunset, or am awed by the starry heavens above, I am changed but the rest of

[6] J. Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916) (Hereafter 'Dewey').

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the world is not, or only to the extent that the atmosphere is changed by my breathing, and the ground by my walking on it. Dewey has good reasons to emphasize these small changes; the thought that experience is a natural event, that the experiencer, or knower, is part of the experienced or known world, was early in this century, and is still, a thought that takes many philosophers by surprise. Nevertheless, the difference between what happens to a peach when I enjoy eating it and what happens to the sun and clouds when I enjoy watching a sunset seems to me as profound as any difference can be. The peach is certainly changed, the sunset is certainly not changed; I recognize, however, that these are just end points of a continuum of more or less mutually invasive interactions.[7]

I seem to have wandered far afield. I have not. Consider this very mundane happening. Susan comes home loaded with grocery bags, drops them on the kitchen table, fills a glass with water, drinks thirstily and begins to unpack the bags. She takes out a melon, wonders whether it is ripe, tests whether it is soft at the stem end, smells it, hefts it, concludes that it is not ripe, that she had better leave it out of the refrigerator so that it will continue to ripen. Throughout all this, Susan perceives. Her arms ache from the weight of the bags, she sees the fortunately uncluttered table top, she sees the glass, feels it smoothly in her hand, hears the water running, feels the cool liquid running down her parched throat. She suffers and enjoys. Her arms ache, and cease aching when the bags are dropped; her throat is parched, the water feels good. We could represent what happened as cases of problem solving, and if we did that, we would represent them as cases of knowing. Thus, for example, we could tell this story. Susan's arms ache, she asks herself, what is to be done? She realizes that her arms would stop aching if she would put down the bags. She seeks a place to put them. She sees the empty table. She formulates the hypothesis that the table would be good place for the bags. She drops the bags on the table. Her arms stop aching. The problem has been solved, the two hypotheses: that her arms would stop aching, and that the table would be a good place for the bags have been confirmed. Susan knows that the table is a good

[7] One might think that these endpoints correspond to Dewey's distinction between experimental and empirical experience, between changes in the environment deliberately produced to provide us with knowledge versus experiences taken just as they happen to come along. But I doubt that things line up quite so neatly. Again, one might think that the experiences that do not change the experienced object are consummatory experiences, but enjoying a peach is also consummatory, while an astronomers carefully planned observations leave the stars as untouched as does my awe.

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place for bags. The table has become an object-of-knowledge. If the table, being very old and rickety, had collapsed under the weight of the bags, Susan's second hypothesis would have been disconfirmed, she would now know that the table is not a good place for bags. The table, now broken, once again would be an object-of-knowledge. Moreover, although her arms have stopped aching, some eggs have been smashed and a jar of jam broken. Susan has a new problem, she needs to clean up a sticky mess.

This version of the story is absurd. Susan does not enact Dewey's pattern of inquiry. The version of the story that I originally told is a far more adequate account of what happened. Dewey insisted that perceiving is not knowing, meaning not that perceiving is never knowing, but that it is a way of being in the world, of interacting with the world that is often, if I may coin an expression, precognitive. One must acknowledge that 'knowing' is a term fraught with philosophical baggage; different baggage for different philosophers. James, at any rate in *The Principles of Psychology*, insisted that all perceiving is cognitive, that is to say, is of something other than itself. Dewey agreed with that. Dewey insisted that perceiving is not knowing, that is, is not always accompanied by a perceptual judgment, does not always occur as part of a process of inquiry. We perceive all the time, in every waking moment, but we inquire only when we find ourselves in a problematic situation. James would have agreed with that. James rejected the Cartesian epistemological problem as emphatically as did Dewey.

What then do we want to say about Susan? Clearly, it is absurd to say that she enacts the pattern of inquiry that I sketched above. She does not do that until she unpacks the melon. The difference in her behaviour with respect to the melon and with respect to, say, a carton of eggs is striking. The eggs are put into the refrigerator without any hesitation or, as we say, without thinking, just as the bags were put on the table without any hesitation. The melon is examined, found to be not quite ripe, thought about, and finally left out of the refrigerator. The not-quite-ripe melon is what Dewey calls an object-of-knowledge. Susan thought about the melon, investigated whether it was ripe, came to believe that it was not. It seems that she did not think about the eggs.

Perceiving is not, or rather need not be, knowing, that is, it need not be accompanied by a perceptual judgment. But when Susan comes into the kitchen with her arms aching from the weight of the bags, does she not believe that there is a table, that it would be good to put the bags on the table, etc.? How can she have these beliefs if she doesn't have these thoughts, if she doesn't entertain these propositions? But if we say that she does, we end up ascribing to

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Susan a mental life that is radically different from the thoughts that she actually has. Actually, all this while Susan is thinking about the dinner party she will give on Friday, the party for which the melon must be ripe. Peirce, giving credit to Bain, defined a belief as what one is prepared to act on.[8] Clearly, Susan acts as if she believed that there is a table, that putting the bags on it will bring relief to her aching arms, etc. We have returned to the point we reached a while ago. Then I agreed with Dewey's claim that perceiving is not always accompanied by perceptual judgments; I have now added that action may follow upon perception 'without thinking,' i.e., without the intervention of a perceptual judgment. Let us describe what happens in this way. Susan notices certain features of her environment, features that are noteworthy because of their relationship to her interests (her interest in getting rid of that load, her interest in assuaging her thirst). Susan has certain percepts and reacts to them. What are these percepts? I have answered that question already. A table, a glass, a faucet. Familiar objects of everyday life. But, someone might say, there is more to these things than meets the eye or the hand. Of course. Susan acts as if she had entertained and accepted the proposition that there is a table, and if subsequent experience reveals additional features of these things, especially if these features are surprising, then Susan will come to entertain and accept a proposition that revises that never actually entertained perceptual judgment. The 'table' may turn out to be a counter-top, the 'glass' to be made of plastic, and the faucet a *trompe l'oeil*, though none of this will happen to Susan in her own familiar kitchen.

I have introduced the idea of a perceptual judgment. The ultimate evidence for any knowledge claim is a perception. But only a judgment can play the role of premise in an inference. Thus we need perceptual judgments. Although in daily life perceptions may fail to prompt perceptual judgments and inquiry, that is, percepts may fail to become objects-of-knowledge, Dewey notes that, because of their evidentiary status, in science perceptions '*become* objects of minute, accurate, and experimental scrutiny,' (Dewey, 260) i.e., they become objects-of-knowledge. Even in every day life, perceptions often function as evidence of some other perception to come, they are used as signs. 'Thus, *for practical purposes*, many perceptual events are cases of knowledge; that is they have been *used* as such so often that the habit of so using them is established and automatic.' (Dewey, 261) Let us say, then, that to every percept there

[8] C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (eds.) (Cambridge, MA: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965), 5.12. (References to Peirce's *Collected Papers* are given by volume and paragraph.)

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corresponds a possible perceptual judgment, but that judgment may never have been articulated or entertained.

I need to abandon Susan. Tables, glasses, faucets, are artifacts; of course, with respect to them, 'the trail of the human serpent is over everything.'[9] If we did not have certain needs and interests, human beings would not have invented tables, glasses, water systems with their faucets, etc. etc. Of course, having invented them, we have invented names for them, we value them, we pass these names and values on to our children, who have the same needs and interests as we do. What James and Dewey point out is that all our perceivings of natural objects and events as well as of things and situations that we deliberately bring about are what they are because they are *our* perceptions, where 'we' refers variously to the individual perceiver, to the society to which he or she belongs, or to humanity at large. Let us take these points in reverse order. James writes, '. . . *our fundamental ways of thinking about things are discoveries of exceedingly remote ancestors, which have been able to preserve themselves throughout the experience of all subsequent time.* They form . . . the stage of *common sense*.' (*Pragmatism*, p. 83; his emphasis) That is, we see the world in terms of things and events, causes and effects, places and times, etc. But today's common sense is not that of a thousand years ago. We do not see witches, for example. Finally, percepts are also a function of the individual perceiver's idiosyncratic beliefs, needs, interests, and values. Susan sees the empty table top but fails to notice the blinking light of the answering machine. Emerson teaches us in *Nature* to 'distinguish the stick of timber of the wood-cutter from the tree of the poet.'[10]

But, some philosophers will object, the wood-cutter's stick of timber is the tree of the poet; there is a physical object there and a description, provided by science, that is not shaped by anyone's interest. There is the absolute conception of the object that occupies that space-time region. This physical object, these philosophers insist, is what it is quite independently of us. It would be what it is even if there were no human beings at all.[11] To this I reply that it is, of course, generally in our interest to pay attention to those

[9] W. James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (Cambridge, MA & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1978), 37.

[10] R. W. Emerson, *Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, l978), 9.

[11] I am thinking here of Bernard Williams. And there are philosophers, philosophers as different otherwise as Plato and G. E. Moore, who would say that there are values that are what they are independent of what any human being actually values. I am rejecting all these forms of realism.

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features of the world that we can change only by making a physical effort. Dangers do not go away because we refuse to face them. Again, it is often in our interest to describe the world in terms that are non-perspectival. Physics and her sister sciences represent triumphs of human knowledge. For many purposes, the physical description is the only description we want, but there are other purposes, just as legitimate, just as pressing, for which the physicists' description is quite useless. I reject both the claim that the so-called absolute conception is better, from the standpoint of knowledge, than other descriptions, and that it is a description that is not interest relative. It is precisely because we have an interest in the kind of knowledge that physical science provides that we have the physical sciences. It turns out that in order to satisfy many of our interests, we need the sort of knowledge that the sciences provide; it turns out also that some people are passionately interested in that sort of knowledge quite regardless of what other purposes it might serve. And that is a good thing. But whether one agrees with Peirce that scientists should pursue the truth single-mindedly, should not even think about its possible applications, or whether one thinks, as many bio-ethicists now do, that it is irresponsible not to consider the consequences of one's discoveries, in choosing to devote one's life to science, and in choosing what particular subjects to pursue, one makes a moral judgment. Moreover, one would have to have a very narrow conception of value if one wanted to say that physicists, when they actually do physics, don't make value judgments. They judge that certain observations are relevant or irrelevant, that a certain question is interesting while another is not, that a hypothesis is plausible enough to spend time investigating it, that a certain procedure is reliable, etc. Into the discovery/invention of a physical theory value judgments enter again and again. Even aesthetic values play a role. One theory may be preferred to another because of its elegance, or because of its appeal to some intuitive sense of how a theory, or the universe, ought to be. I conclude that there are no objects-of-knowledge, there are no conceptions of the world and of the objects in it, that are not value laden. In this sense, every object-of-knowledge is an object-of-evaluation.

How, then, does a percept differ from, say, a physical object? Here we must guard against saying that it doesn't last as long. For if we said that, we would confuse the event of perception with the object perceived, and we would have taken a step on the slippery road to sense-data. The percept, I want to say—and here I am not sure whether Dewey would adopt the same terminology—is the common sense object. I say deliberately 'common sense object' rather than with many philosophers 'material object' for two reasons. The first

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is that I know that rainbows and shadows and mirror images are common sense objects just as are sticks and stones, tables and water; I don't know whether they are material objects. My second reason is that the term 'material object' belongs, as Austin has pointed out[12] to a particular philosophy of perception, precisely the kind of philosophy of perception that I am rejecting. So, the percept is the common sense object; there is, as I said above, only a difference in epistemological status. That difference is the difference between perceptual judgments and the judgments to which we are entitled at the end of inquiry. To be sure, these various judgments form a continuum; the perceptual judgment lies at one end, it is the most limited of judgments. I do not mean to say that perceptual judgments are so limited that they cannot be false, hence that they have no truth values. 'This is here now' is not a perceptual judgment, and it is useless as a premise. Perceptual judgments can be false, and they can be found out to be false; they give some hostages to the future. The perceptual judgment may be 'there is a melon (here, now),' and there may be other perceptual judgments, 'it is very hard, even around the stem,' and 'it doesn't feel heavy', and on the basis of these perceptual judgments, the latter two the result of deliberate observations, Susan concluded that the melon was not ripe. 'The melon is not ripe' is for Susan in these circumstances not a perceptual judgment, though if Susan had thoughtlessly cut into the melon and found its flesh hard and tasteless, she would have perceived an unripe melon; in the case as described, she perceives a melon, period. But that melon is the unripe melon she would have perceived had she cut into it. In short, the percept is the common sense object. But perceptual judgments are least judgments, giving only limited hostages to the future. Although perceptual judgments mark the beginning of inquiry, they occur throughout the process. They mark, at least in principle and potentially, also its end. But at the end they are like the last piece placed in a jigsaw puzzle; it is the whole picture, the object-of-knowledge, not the final percept that gets our attention. For the sake of completeness, and to forestall possible misunderstandings, I want to add that the object-of-knowledge at the end of inquiry need not be a common sense object; it may be the state of the economy, or a pulsar, the virus that causes AIDS, or the authenticity of a Rembrandt painting; none of these are common sense objects.

To summarize, perceptual judgments are implicated in all our knowings, and the beliefs we already hold are implicated in our perceivings. Perceptual judgments are the points at which the web of

[12] J. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 4.

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our beliefs is attached to experience, but what those points are is a function not only of the world but of the whole web of beliefs. Our percepts and our beliefs make up our percepts and our beliefs.

Some of our percepts are what I have called valuings, and some of our beliefs are the results of evaluations, are value judgments. You will recall Susan's aching arms and parched throat as well as her relief when the load was relinquished and the pleasure of the cold drink. These instances of valuings are so unproblematic, so often experienced, that no evaluation is called for. On the other hand, consider James' example. Both seeing the described world as utopia and seeing the hideousness of deliberately accepting its enjoyment at the cost of one lonely soul's eternal torture are valuings, valuings that show themselves in conflicting impulses: an impulse to grasp and an impulse to push away. That is one sort of situation that prompts evaluation. Reflection, an indispensable part of any inquiry, reveals here that what is attracting is utopia, while what is repelling is deliberately accepting utopia at a horrendous price. While these are not identical, they are so connected that one cannot have one without the other. Of course, this problem is an imagined problem, but in less extreme forms it is a problem that arises in ordinary life. It arises for anyone who believes that he or she can do a great deal of good for many people if only he or she is willing to do a grievous injustice to a particular person. The problem may present itself as the problem of dirty hands—what sort of person would I be if I did this or that? Or it may present itself as wanting desperately the happiness of a large number of people and yet being utterly repelled by the suffering of that lonely soul. Or it may seem entirely obvious that one must sacrifice the lonely soul for the sake of millions of starving children and homeless men and women. Or, again, it may seem obvious that one cannot use even one soul as a mere means to an otherwise general happiness. The last two possibilities show how accepting a normative theory may shape one's valuings, just as accepting an optical theory may shape what one sees. Conversely, that a moral theory blinds one to morally significant features of a situation may be a reason for rejecting the theory, just as physical theories are rejected if they cannot be reconciled with well-known phenomena.

And, just as valuings and values, can and do shape one's percepts, so beliefs shape one's valuings and values. People did not simply see a witch, they feared and hated her; they saw an evil old woman. Today, we see an ugly old woman. We may pity her or may be repelled by her ugliness, but our revulsion is aesthetic not moral.

I said earlier that perceiving is the *sine qua non* of inquiry, I want to point out now that, in particular, inquiry is prompted by valuing,

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though not all valuings prompt inquiry, and even when a valuing prompts inquiry that inquiry may not be an evaluation, i.e. its aim may not be to arrive at a value judgment. What prompts inquiry, according to Peirce, is doubt, an uncomfortable state, a state that we wish to get out of, a state that is valued negatively. Dewey says that inquiry begins when one finds oneself in a problematic situation—when the outcome of the situation is not clear. Dewey emphasized, as he always does, the objectivity of a problematic situation. It is not the perceiver's state of mind, it is the actual situation that is problematic. Nevertheless, it is not the situation that institutes an inquiry, it is we who do that. We do that because we find that we cannot, in this situation, continue without thinking. Of course, the experience may be on the whole pleasant. Scientists do not find what they do unpleasant, they find it interesting, exciting, sometimes even exhilarating. They deliberately put themselves into a situation in which they are driven to inquire. Thus, although I mentioned Peirce, I do not want to say that what prompts inquiry is always an unpleasant feeling. Still, in ordinary life, it is most often the case that inquiry begins when things go wrong, when our habitual ways of acting and reacting are unsuccessful or blocked. Dewey reminds as that we should more often than we do evaluate our valuings. For example, we should wonder how an enjoyed situation came about, how it can be prolonged, or whether part of its charm is precisely that it is short-lived. We should wonder how it, or something like it, can be reproduced. We are far more likely to ask the analogous questions about an unpleasant situation. Dewey's advice is worth listening to. We do all too often fail to consider the price someone else is paying for our joys. Yet I also think that philosophers, including Dewey, tend to over-intellectualize our lives, tend to concentrate on events and situations that can be thought about fruitfully. But it is also, especially for us who dwell in cities, important to remember that there are joys that we may and must just take and enjoy. Once again, I remind you of watching a sunset.

Determining what we might call for short the price of an enjoyment is, of course, only one example of an evaluation. Deciding what to do in a dirty hands situation is another. The variety of moral situations is staggering, and they form only a subclass of the class of situations in which a value judgment is conspicuously sought as the outcome of inquiry. This is not the place to rehearse the sort of reasoning one goes through in such cases. While it comes to some as a surprise that value judgments are inextricably enmeshed in theoretical reasoning, everyone acknowledges that one's command of the facts plays an important part in one's practical reasoning. What I want to stress here are two things. First, that

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value-judgments are shaped and tested by valuings, just as scientific and common sense judgments are shaped and tested by percepts; second, that one's valuings are shaped by the values one already has, in particular by the values shared in one's society, or by human beings in general, just as we saw in greater detail that percepts are shaped by beliefs one already has. Thus, I might add to my earlier pronouncement the following: our valuings and our values make up our valuings and our values.

Although I am coming to the end of this paper, I want to emphasize this last point. I believe that the view I am defending differs quite radically from that of so-called moral realists, but I cannot defend this here. What I can do is to tie up the bits and pieces of this essay.

My title speaks of perceiving facts and values. Whenever one wants to undermine the fact-value distinction one is forced to use the fact-value vocabulary. But the very vocabulary is misleading. Of course there is a difference between what one says when one says how the world is and what one says when one says how the world ought to be, but it won't do to say that the former is a statement of facts and the latter of values. For, descriptions of the actual world that contrast with prescriptions for a better world have to speak of cruelty and of kindness, of ingratitude and compassion, of just and unjust institutions, etc. etc. Descriptions and prescriptions will have to use the same vocabulary, and only experience can tell whether our prescriptions were wise or not. Moreover, I have tried to argue that valuings and evaluations are implicated in knowledge claims that do not purport to be value judgments, and conversely that perceptual and other purportedly value-free knowledge claims are implicated in value judgments.

Have I, then, defended the thesis that we perceive facts and values? Actually, I have defended the view that perceiving/valuing is only the beginning of a process of inquiry/evaluation at the end of which we are entitled to claim knowledge of facts and of values. Let me return one more time to William James's example. Ignore that James imagined the example, ignore also that his point was to draw our attention to the fact that we have moral perceptions. Recall simply that we began with a fact: either countless people will lead brief and miserable lives or one human soul will suffer eternal torture. Accepting that fact, we found ourselves in moral agony: how can one possibly choose? Were this a real situation, we should by now be suspicious of the fact. We should wonder what hidden valuations lead to that understanding of the situation. The US Congress has sacrificed the health and welfare of hundreds of thousands of children because the men and women who voted for so-called welfare

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reform accepted without question certain economic and political facts, for example, that the defence budget cannot be cut or that certain taxes must not be raised. They accepted as a fact that they had only a limited number of alternatives. Their values (their commitment to a balanced budget, their contempt for welfare 'queens') blinded them to other alternatives and to the long run consequences of the alternatives that they did see. Being thus ill-informed, they decided neither wisely nor well.

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