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< 6,000 words

Glen Pettigrove's paper "What Virtue Adds to Value" is a powerful broadside against a modern version of the proportionality principle as expressed or implied, for example, in the work of Thomas Hurka, Robert Nozick, and Christine Tappolet.[1] As Pettigrove articulates it, this principle claims that "our actions and attitudes ought to be proportioned to the degree of value present in the object, action, or event to which they are a response." [REF]

Careful readers will note that two kinds of proportioning are implied in this definition: first, the way in which actions and attitudes should be matched with values; and, second, the way in which at least some values and perhaps all values can be compared to other values in terms of degree, suggesting an implicit scale to which such values can be compared. Given that a common scale is required for comparisons of degree, I shall refer in my commentary to this approach as a monistic or univocal account of value.

The arguments of the paper fall into two major parts: sections 1 and 2 are devoted to a critique and possible modifications of the proportionality principle, while section 3 introduces an account of virtue that aims to address one of the key problems arising from the principle, specifically its presupposition or implication of a univocal account of value.

Pettigrove's principal method of challenging the proportionality principle in sections 1 and 2 is to apply it to various situations, showing that this application leads easily to assessments that would violate most people's moral sensibilities. One example he offers is that of a parent who, in adhering to the principle, decides not love his child until he is acquainted with the child's value; another is that of a mother who exhorts her child, "Do your

[1] As references, Pettigrove cites, for example, from Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).; Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981).; and Christine Tappolet, "Value and Emotions," in *The Oxford Handbook of Value Theory*, ed. Iwao Hirose and Jonas Olson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 80–95.

best today, darling, because if you don't, Mummy will be obliged to love you less." [REF] The first example is, in effect, a critique of the first sense of proportionality noted above, namely the way in which actions and attitudes should match or correspond to values. The second example is a critique of the second sense of proportionality, namely the reduction of assessed value, in this case a mother's love, to degrees of some one kind of thing.

As a more general example of the problem of assessing values in terms of degree, Pettigrove also offers a thought experiment about a woman who develops a rare appreciation for early Welsh literature and who becomes a respected expert. [REF] In this case, he not only asks how the value of such a life can easily be compared to that of other vocations, but how its own value can be assessed in advance without an immersion in the field itself. On the basis of these and similar examples, most people, including me, would agree with Pettigrove that there are indeed "significant aspects of our ethical lives that are at odds with the proportionality principle." [REF]

Nevertheless, I have an overall concern about sections 1 and 2 of this paper, namely the extent to which these sections make it seem that value theory and the proportionality principle are practically synonymous. Granted, many authors, including the three cited principally in this paper, do express or imply the proportionality principle as a basis for comparing value. In addition, this association of value with a univocal scale is enhanced by many habituating practices of the contemporary world, in which valuations in terms of a common scale are ubiquitous. For example, the result of a successful financial valuation, or a successful experimental valuation, for instance by a set of bathroom scales, is to represent whatever is being valued, regardless of what kind of thing it is, by a single number.

Yet the broader picture is that although value theory and the proportionality principle overlap, they are not coterminous. After all, people spoke about goodness long before the development of value theory, and it is by no means clear that goodness, which is tracked by

value in some way, can ever be reduced to degrees of some one thing. If you or I judge that an apple is good, or a car is good, or a person is good, we are using the same term 'good' but will find few, if any, common factors. A particular apple may be sweet and juicy to eat; a particular car may be fast (which may appeal to those with one set of values) or environmentally friendly (appealing to those with another set of values); and a particular person may be virtuous by the standard, for example, of a Greek citizen philosopher or of a Christian saint. Just as Aristotle argued that there are many ways in which a thing is said to be,[2] the goodness of the particular apple, car or person, are different kinds of goodness because they are diverse kinds of things, with diverse exemplars of flourishing or perfection.

Moreover, the fact that value theory and the proportionality principle are not coterminous is also apparent in the fact that not all value theorists uphold the monistic or univocal nature of goodness implied by the proportionality principle. For example, Pettigrove cites Christine Tappolet's work from chapter 5 of a volume *The Oxford Handbook of Value Theory*. But in the same volume, chapter 8 by Chris Heathwood, "Monism and Pluralism about Value," shows that there is an ongoing debate on this matter and that not all value theorists conceive of value in terms of a univocal scale enabling comparisons of degree.[3]

These considerations complicate an assessment of the first two sections of Pettigrove's paper, and this assessment will vary depending on what one considers to be his principal aim. If his aim is a critique or some comment on the inadequacy of value theory, as suggested by the title, Pettigrove should, in my view, have represented value theory more fully. In particular, he should have justified more clearly his transition at the beginning from a discussion of values to a discussion of the proportionality principle, noting also that not all value theorists consider value to be univocal in the manner implied by the principle.

[2] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV.2.1003a33-b11.
[3] Chris Heathwood, "Monism and Pluralism About Value," in *The Oxford Handbook of Value Theory*, ed. Iwao Hirose and Jonas Olson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 136–57.

On the other hand, if his aim is to show the inadequacy of the proportionality principle, to which he devotes much of his paper, he does indeed offer convincing examples of how the principle can violate most people's moral sensibilities. But what is missing is a comment on the broader context, given that the underlying issue, the non-univocal nature of goodness, is one of the oldest in ethics and long predates value theory. Hence while it is pleasing that Pettigrove aligns with many philosophers and common sense on this issue, in the broader context it is unclear that he is doing much more than flogging a very dead horse, or at least a horse that ought to be deceased by now, given cogent criticisms across so many centuries.[4]

Section 3, the second major part of the paper, presents the concept of virtue, beginning with an introduction and critique of two competing accounts of how virtue is related to value. The first of these is the 'recursive account', for which Pettigrove adopts Hurka's formulation of virtue, in which the goodness of virtue depends on attitudes of desiring, pursuing, or taking pleasure in that which is valued.[5] For the second account, which Pettigrove calls the 'response-dependent account', the direction of dependence is reversed. Properties picked out by value claims are relative to the responses of the virtuous.

Pettigrove's praises and criticisms of these accounts may appear strange at first since some of the issues he raises seem rather tangential. The only way I have been able to make sense of this section is to assume a backstory, which is risky insofar as I have to draw from what is not explicit in the paper and make some sweeping generalisations. Nevertheless, in the hope that this backstory is of some help I summarise it as follows.

At least since the Reformation and the Cartesian revolution, a vast historical shift has been taking place in philosophy in general and ethics in particular that has changed and is still

[4] See also Aristotle's comments on the differences of ethics and mathematics in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.3.1094b10-27. See also Bentham's qualifications of his own utility principle. For a summary, see, for example, James E. Crimmins, "Jeremy Bentham," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2019 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2019), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/bentham/.

[5] Pettigrove draws principally from Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, 13, 16, and 17.

changing the focus from object to subject. One of the more well-known markers of this change include the Lutheran shift from the priority of being righteous to being reckoned as righteous by God, with the latter state often described metaphorically as dung covered in snow.[6] Other famous markers include the prioritisation of the thinking 'I' by Descartes or Kant's 'Copernican turn'. Even the rise of modern Cartesian sciences, starting with physics, is also a marker of this change in the following sense: although modern science prioritises rigorous objective measurement, questions of being are largely set aside in favour of questions of measurement by the experimenter under controlled conditions. As an example, also cited earlier, a set of bathroom scales provides a measurement but cannot answer the question "What is it?" about the kind of object that is placed on them. All of the information provided by the scales is in terms of the degree of force exerted by gravity.

The modern rise of value theory is another marker of this change. Value theory assumes the mantle of ethics and purports to address many traditional ethical problems, such as what is 'good', 'better', and 'bad'. [7] Nevertheless, value theory, even by its name and way of framing these questions, marks a shift in priority from the object to the valuing subject. Moreover, this shift in emphasis is prior to and distinct from the particular and diverse ways in which individual value theorists answer the question of whether, and to what extent, the objects of value are subjective psychological states or objective states.

The backstory above is important for understanding Pettigrove's paper, first, because the paper is situated within the world of value theory and, second, because Pettigrove, in this paper and in his previous work, endorses and promotes the ongoing shift from the object to the valuing subject. Indeed, I have noted this promotion already in a published review of his

[6] Pettigrove offers a similar image of blanketing sin by quoting Matthew 5:45 [REF], in which God is described as sending sun and rain on just and unjust alike, rather than one of a vast number of texts, such Matthew 25:31-46 on the Last Judgment, which teach that divine indifference to good and evil is only apparent and temporary.
[7] See, for example, Mark Schroeder, "Value Theory," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/value-theory/.

book *Forgiveness and Love*, in which he claims that love involves "seeing the beloved as good," an inclination and commitment to the well-being of the beloved and desiring "to be esteemed by the beloved"."[8] Similarly, although 'forgiveness' has its origins in the Old English *forgiefan*, which also means "to give in marriage," I have noted previously that "Pettigrove in fact treats "I love you" and "I forgive you" substantively in terms of a first-person act in which any relationship-enabling response by the second person is accidental."[9] Hence for both forgiveness and love, Pettigrove prioritises the first-person perspective, consistent with the historical shift of object to subject noted above.

Pettigrove's present paper gives a similar priority to the valuing subject. Indeed, more than once he uses strong rhetorical language against the possibility that the object of what is being valued, or loved, or forgiven, might have anything to contribute. One example is his comment that "The attitudes of the forgiver are not held hostage by the actions of the wrongdoer; rather, the forgiver's gift is explained by the generosity of its giver," [REF] a claim that reduces the possible contributions of wrongdoers to the attainment of forgiveness to a kind of moral kidnapping. Another example is his complimentary citation of Marilynne Robinson's claim that "Love is holy because it is like grace – the worthiness of its object is never really what matters," [REF][10] a claim, incidentally, that reflects a Lutheran conception of grace, distinct from the Judeo-Catholic focus on covenant, and also one that moves the focus to the lover rather than the beloved, consistent with the same shift.

From the perspective of this endorsement of the primacy of the valuing subject, it is also easier to understand Pettigrove's assessments of the recursive and response-dependent accounts of virtue. For example, in his evaluation of the recursive account he claims that one of its attractive features is that it recognizes that the contents of our attitudes have a worth

[8] Glen Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 95.
[9] Andrew Pinsent, "Review of Forgiveness and Love, by Glen Pettigrove," *Philosophical Quarterly* 65, no. 261 (October 2015).
[10] Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (London: Virago, 2005), 238.

"that is not derived from or explained by the good consequences they characteristically generate." [REF] He then adds that "We don't need to appeal to probable outcomes to think there is something good about having a positive attitude toward something one believes to be good." [REF]

Taken at face value, both these claims appear strange. Granted that outcomes are not the whole story of virtue, they are rather important to everyday and classical understanding of virtuous action, an elementary example being temperance with respect to food and drink. On this basis, it is hard to concur with the implication of Pettigrove's claim, namely that we are making genuine progress with accounts of virtue that don't derive anything from outcomes. As for the accompanying claim, "that there is something good about having a positive attitude toward something one believes to be good," I suppose I agree insofar as the internal harmony of attitudes and beliefs is a characteristic of good human beings. Nevertheless, I think that solipsistic persons, or extremely evil persons who have silenced their consciences, may not be conscious of any lack of harmony either. On this basis, once again it is unclear how Pettigrove's assessments indicate genuine progress in virtue ethics.

On the other hand, if one assumes the backstory above, then Pettigrove's assessments do make some sense. After all, his endorsement of a shift away from objective consequences and his comments on the internal alignment of attitude and belief is consistent with the historical shift from object to subject cited previously. Hence what is difficult to understand from an everyday perspective on virtue does make some sense in the context of this historic shift.

When Pettigrove turns from the recursive to the response-dependent account, the properties that are picked out by value claims are relative to the responses of the virtuous. Pettigrove states that this response-dependent account has a number of attractions. [REF] Although he does not expand on these attractions explicitly at this point, his previous and more descriptive comments, together with the paper as a whole, suggests that he leans

towards the prioritisation of the valuer. His main point is that a case can be made that the perception of value, like the perception of colour, does depend at least in part on the response of the perceiver. [REF] Again, this judgment is consistent with the backstory of the shift from the object to the valuing subject.

On the negative side, Pettigrove raises the fairly obvious point that values that are dependent on the virtuous in turn depends on the existence of at least some virtuous observers, although he adds that adequately virtuous observers may well be adequate for the purposes of value-perception. [REF] More serious for him is the issue that people also have diverse tastes in what they perceive to be good and will therefore be inconsistent in what they value. In the cases that Pettigrove cites, the issue is not a matter of diverse opposites, in the sense of demarcations of good and evil, but simply that of diverse goods, such as the person or subject one loves. In other words, as in the case of his critique of the proportionality principle, the issue is that the valued good is said in many ways that are not captured adequately by differences of degree.

Pettigrove expands on this point in the last substantial part of his paper, in which he argues that, at least sometimes, "a virtuous action will not be explained by other goods the agent appreciates, pursues, or promotes. It will be explained by qualities of the agent." [REF] In other words, at least to this point, he concurs with the response-dependent account of virtue. But he goes on to underline the way in which these qualities can vary so much from agent to agent, including, for example, "what he notices and how he notices it, what he cares about and how he cares about it, what he thinks about and how he thinks about it, what he does and how he does it, his ongoing projects, and his personal style." [REF]

On this basis, Pettigrove advocates what he calls a *modus operandi* (MO) approach to virtue, taking account of the particularity of each moral agent. Although he points out briefly that some of these ways of being may be deplorable and be called vices, his focus is

principally on diverse kinds of good temperament/style combinations. As one example, he offers the situation of two virtuous flatmates who are romantically attracted to different women, or have diverse vocational interests, say, in philosophy and engineering respectively. As another example, various colleagues in an office, who may share similar values that bear on a case, are nevertheless anticipated to respond across a spectrum of ways if asked for help. [REF]

To summarise up to this point, the paper is written from the perspective of the worldview of value theory and of a broader historical shift from the object to the valuing subject. Pettigrove endorses this shift, according to the sense of his comments. Moreover, although he criticizes the response-dependent account, his own MO approach seems to resemble it in at least the following sense, namely that the locus for grounding value is the valuer, or specifically the characteristic way of being of the valuer,

But Pettigrove has noticed a problem, namely that values discerned from, or projected on, or imputed to objects according to the proportionality principle are essentially greyscale, namely degrees of something single-coloured or monistic. This greyscale has two closely associated problems. One problem, examined in sections 1 and 2 of the paper, is that assessments based on degree often violate moral sensibilities. But the other and associated problem, highlighted more in section 3, is that the valued goods are so variable in kind. To stretch the metaphor, grey is not enough; we need a spectrum of colours to represent the world in which we live.

Given the backstory of the general shift from object to valuing subject, as well as his inclination to further this shift, it is not, therefore, surprising that Pettigrove concludes his paper by seeking a remedy from the valuing subject. By stretching the term ‘virtue’ to mean an aspect of some temperament/style combination, valuers with diverse virtues can be said to

have diverse temperaments and style. On this basis, they discern, or project, or impute diverse values to objects, turning a greyscale world into something more colourful.

It is, I think, in this spirit that Pettigrove offers a final rhetorical flourish in his paper,

> The virtuous agent does not just react to the values she sees in the environment around her. She is also active. We admire her clear-eyed appreciation of the value she encounters, to be sure, but that is not all we admire about her. We also admire what she brings to her environment, the range of other qualities that contribute to her characteristic way of being. [REF]

A virtuous agent, according to Pettigrove in this passage, "does not just react", a comment that is consistent with his general shift to the primacy of the valuer over the object. On the contrary, such agents are active and bring something admirable to their environment. And part of what is admirable, in the context of this passage and the paper as a whole, is the diversity of their characteristic ways of being and valuing, a diversity that also transforms the ethical landscape in which they live and interact with others.

How, then, should this paper as a whole be evaluated? As is perhaps appropriate considering its content, one's assessment will very much depend on one's worldview. From the perspective of value theory, especially one in which value is treated univocally, I think Pettigrove has provided a useful service. He has offered clear, well-constructed, and credible counterexamples to show that such an approach is inadequate to account for the vast diversity of goodness, in particular the special kinds of goodness of love and relationships. Within this worldview, Pettigrove might in fact be said to have performed an Aristotelian service. Just as Aristotle argued that there are many ways in which a thing can be said to be, Pettigrove has argued that there are many ways in which a thing can be said to be valued.

Within this perspective, my criticisms are principally of some of the details. As noted previously, Pettigrove does not really acknowledge that not all value theory is univocal, or that there is already work on pluralistic accounts of value. I also note that he stretches the meaning of the term 'virtue' so that its main role, in this paper, is to expresses some aspect of

some temperament/style combination. Perhaps Pettigrove feels entitled to take this step, especially given his focus on the primacy of the valuer, but it is a confusing one, at least to this reader and probably to others. In my opinion, we should avoid wrenching words away from their customary meanings, otherwise we risk entering the confusing and chaotic fantasyland of Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*.[11]

Moreover, if one steps beyond the world of value theory, one's evaluation of Pettigrove's paper will be rather different and probably more negative. Consistent with many of his arguments, praises, criticisms, and passing comments, Pettigrove seems to endorse and indeed further promote the historic shift from object to valuing subject. If one considers that this shift has already gone too far in the world of academic philosophy and contemporary culture, then one will not find much comfort in Pettigrove's paper. Although it is beyond the scope of my work here to address this broader issue, I recommend a famous book by C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, which severely criticises this historic shift.[12]

I will, however, make one final comment, re-capitulating a concern I raised in my review of *Forgiveness and Love*. In this paper, as in his earlier work, Pettigrove uses short fictional narratives of relationships as a means to break the spell of rationalistic reductions, especially of the meaning of love. But as noted above, Pettigrove in fact treats "I love you" and "I forgive you" substantively in terms of a first-person act in which any relationship-enabling response by the second person is accidental. And the problem with a more-or-less exclusively first-person account, as indeed with an objective or third-person account, is that there is no actual relationship with a second person; the Cartesian Ego and its distant descendants, the

[11] "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all." Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures and Through the Looking Glass*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co, 1934), chap. 6, page 205.

[12] C. S. (Clive Staples) Lewis, *The Abolition of Man: Or, Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944).

Pettigrovian valuers, are ultimately isolated. I suspect that neither first- nor third-person accounts can ever really resolve this issue; it is only with the second-person perspective, oriented towards friendship, that we can hope to break this isolation.[13]

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[13] For an application of a second-person perspective to the problem of personal isolation, see, for example, Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010). See also Eleonore Stump, *Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). I have also applied this perspective to interpret Aquinas's moral philosophy in Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts* (New York; Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2012).