



# Feeling as Consciousness of Value

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## Abstract

A vast range of our everyday experiences seem to involve an immediate consciousness of value. We hear the rudeness of someone making offensive comments. In seeing someone risking her life to save another, we recognize her bravery. When we witness a person shouting at an innocent child, we feel the unfairness of this action. If, in learning of a close friend's success, envy arises in us, we experience our own emotional response as wrong. How are these values apprehended? The three most common answers provided by contemporary philosophy explain the consciousness of value in terms of judgment, emotion, or perception. An alternative view endorsed mainly by authors inspired by the phenomenological tradition argues that values are apprehended by an intentional feeling. In this model, it is by virtue of a feeling that objects are presented as being in different degrees and nuances fair or unfair, boring or funny, good or bad. This paper offers an account of this model of feeling and its basic features, and defends it over alternative models. To this end, the paper discusses different versions of the model circulating in current research which until now have developed in parallel rather than in mutual exchange. The paper also applies the proposed account to the moral domain and examines how a feeling of values is presupposed by several moral experiences.

**Keywords** Consciousness of value · Feeling of value · Feeling · Emotion · Value · Moral value · Moral experience

## 1 Introduction

A vast range of our everyday experiences seem to involve an immediate consciousness of value. We hear the rudeness emerging from the mouth of someone making offensive comments. In seeing someone risking her life to save another, we recognize her bravery. When we witness a person shouting at an innocent child, we feel the unfairness of this action. If,

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in learning of a close friend's success, envy arises in us, we experience our own emotional response as wrong. In all these experiences, value properties—also called evaluative or axiological properties or simply values<sup>1</sup>—such as “rude”, “brave”, “unfair” or “wrong” are presented to us as objective features of persons, actions, situations, or our own emotional states. How are these values apprehended?<sup>2</sup> The three most common answers provided by contemporary philosophy explain the consciousness of value in terms of judgment (Solomon 1993; Nussbaum 2001), emotion (Tappolet 2000), or perception (Audi 2013). An alternative view endorsed mainly by authors inspired by the phenomenological tradition argues that values are apprehended by an intentional feeling (De Monticelli 2018, 2020; Drummond 2009; Engelsen 2018; Mulligan 2009, 2010; Steinbock 2014; Vendrell Ferran 2008).<sup>3</sup> In this model, it is by virtue of a feeling of value, hereafter VF, that objects (i.e., things, animals, persons, states of affairs) are presented as being in different degrees and nuances fair or unfair, boring or funny, good or bad. This model offers an attractive picture of the human being according to which we are endowed with the affective ability to disclose the evaluative dimension of reality to which cognition and will are blind. However, the existence of an intentional feeling not assimilable to the emotions has been regarded with skepticism. In fact, VF has been accused of being a conceptual device introduced with the unique purpose of serving a specific theory (Deonna and Teroni 2012, 94); it has been described as obscure and “mysterious” (Mitchell 2019, 16); and its very existence has been called into question (Yaegashi 2019, 76). Against this backdrop, my goal in this paper is to offer a defense of this model and to present an account of how to understand it.

The paper begins by distinguishing the immediate consciousness of value from other forms of consciousness which, despite being directed toward values, are not responsible for their apprehension (Sect. 2). I then proceed to discuss the shortcomings of the models of judgment, emotion, and perception, and introduce as a plausible alternative the model of feeling. Though this model has been endorsed in different versions, we lack a comparative analysis of its strengths. Thus, in making the case for the model of feeling, I aim to fill a lacuna in the current research (Sect. 3). Next, I examine the structure of this feeling and shed light on its basic features with a view to offering an account of how to understand it. To this end, I discuss and scrutinize central claims about VF found in the existing literature. In so doing, I not only initiate a debate between versions of the model which until now have developed in parallel rather than in mutual exchange, but also provide an analysis of VF outside the context of emotion research. Indeed, to date, VF has been mainly invoked either to criticize today's dominant perceptual models of the emotions (De Monticelli 2018, 2020; Mulligan 2009, 2010; Vendrell Ferran 2008) or to present a more nuanced account of emotional experience (Drummond 2009; Steinbock 2014) (for an exception, see Engelsen 2018) (Sect. 4). The paper applies the proposed account to the moral domain and examines how this feeling is presupposed by several moral experiences (Sect. 5). In the final part, I discuss two possible challenges (Sect. 6) and summarize the main findings (Sect. 7).

<sup>1</sup> Value properties are not exactly the same as values (e.g., justice, honesty), but they are sufficiently value-like for us to use the same term to refer to them (see Meinong 2020, 99).

<sup>2</sup> Given that this paper is concerned with an epistemic question, I will not commit myself to a specific ontology of values. Rather my point of departure here is the experience of value as occurring in the objective side of the world, as having “phenomenological objectivity” (Geiger 1986, 65) and as residing in the objects and as features of them (Köhler 1966, 76).

<sup>3</sup> A less extended model, which I will not examine here, explains values in terms of desires (Oddie 2005, 27).

Throughout the paper, I adopt a phenomenological approach. I focus on the descriptive analysis of the experience of value as a form of intentional consciousness. Like many of the proponents of the model of feeling who develop their accounts following Husserl (Drummond, Engelsen) and/or Scheler (De Monticelli, Mulligan, Steinbock), I also take inspiration from the phenomenological tradition. In particular, I draw on the discussions about the feeling of value that took place among realist phenomenologists such as Reinach, Scheler, Pfänder, and von Hildebrand.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Forms of Consciousness of Value

Consider the following cases in which our consciousness is directed toward the value property of the unfair.<sup>5</sup> After reading about the crimes perpetrated by a certain political regime, you imagine the unfair situations experienced by the population of the country in question. You remember having been treated badly by a colleague and in this recollection the situation is presented to you as unfair. As a convinced communist, you believe that the world order under capitalism is unfair. You desire for something unfair to befall someone you hate. In these examples, imagining, remembering, believing, and desiring are presented as forms of consciousness of the value of the unfair. Each of these forms differs from the others in the mode in which it presents the unfairness. In imagining, the unfair situation is presented as a possibility which is now not present to the senses. In remembering, it is presented as something which was unfair in the past. The belief that something is unfair takes it to be the case. In desire, you want the unfairness to occur. Moreover, each of these forms of consciousness exhibits a distinctive phenomenology. On the basis of the “what it is like” of each of these experiences, you can distinguish whether you are just imagining, remembering, believing or desiring something unfair.

Despite these differences, these four forms of consciousness share the feature of being directed toward a value property (in this case: the unfair). When we imagine, remember, believe, or desire something unfair, we are intentionally directed toward an object which possesses a specific value. However, none of these forms of consciousness is responsible for apprehending the value in question. In fact, they presuppose that we are already familiar with it. To imagine, remember, believe, and desire something unfair implies that we already have an idea of unfairness. We can be familiar with this value because we have learned through socialization or testimony that a situation A or an object B which fulfills certain conditions  $x$ ,  $y$ ,  $z$  possesses the value  $\alpha$  or the value  $\beta$  and apply this general knowledge to a particular case. For instance, you have learned that punishing an innocent person is unfair, and can apply this to a concrete case and judge that someone who punishes an innocent person is acting unfairly. You can also be familiar with the value because you have already

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<sup>4</sup> This focus on feeling was not shared by all phenomenologists. Some of them emphasized the cognitive nature of the apprehension of value by referring to it in terms of perception or judgment. Von Hildebrand distinguished between “seeing” and “feeling” a value (1982, 29) and much later, inspired by him and by the Gestalt psychologist Köhler, Mandelbaum referred to the immediate seeing, awareness or insight of the rightness or wrongness of an action in terms of a “direct moral judgment” (1959, 46) (though he acknowledged the role of feelings of demands, duties, and obligations). Mandelbaum’s view has been developed by Horgan and Timmons (2005, 61, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> For an alternative approach to the forms of consciousness based on the idea of degrees of awareness, see Engelsen 2018, 231–236.

experienced it in the past. In any case, these four cases exemplify non-originary forms of consciousness of value: they are directed toward a value, but they are not responsible for its apprehension. Rather, what they apprehend in different modes is the object which bears the value.

By contrast, my concern in this paper is with an originary consciousness of value, i.e., a consciousness in which the value is immediately presented, grasped, disclosed or given to us. This form of consciousness is not only directed toward a value; it is also responsible for the value's apprehension. To remain with the example of the value of the unfair, I am interested in cases in which we directly *experience* the value of the unfair as an objective evaluative property of an object. Unlike non-originary forms, the originary consciousness of value does not presuppose that we are already familiar with the value in question. To apprehend value properties (e.g., unfairness, danger, rudeness) does not require that we already know about these properties through other means. We can experience such values even if we do not have names for them, even if we did not know about or experience them before.

In short, the experience of values does not presuppose that we are familiar with these values, just as seeing objects does not presuppose familiarity with the seen objects. This claim is compatible with the fact that this experience of value always takes place within the horizon of previous experiences. Thus, having knowledge of these evaluative properties (e.g., knowing their names, their typical bearers, etc.) and having experienced them in the past might influence, refine or impair the experience of the value in question.

### 3 Models of Consciousness of Value

In ordinary language, we refer to the immediate experience of value in terms of evaluating, recognizing, appraising, seeing, perceiving, sensing, or feeling the value of something. The existence of these different expressions raises the question of which of the mentioned mental states better captures the nature of the apprehension of value. After examining the models of judgment, emotion, and perception, this section argues that the model of feeling is the best alternative to conceptualize the consciousness of value.

#### 3.1 Judgment

The first model defended mainly by Solomon (1993, 126) and Nussbaum (2001, 22) explains the apprehension of value in terms of a judgment or evaluative appraisal intimately connected with our emotional life. Though this model is right in underscoring the evaluative nature of the consciousness of value, it cannot accommodate some of its other main features.

The first objection has to do with the existence of “contrast cases”, i.e., cases in which the apprehension of a value does not coincide with our judgments about it. It is possible that the apprehension of value might contradict the judgment about the value. You might apprehend an insect as being dangerous while simultaneously believing that it is inoffensive. Moreover, it might happen that you have learned that a person who interrupts her interlocutors is rude, you have come to judge that person A is rude because she exhibits this pattern of behavior, and yet this judgment takes place without you simultaneously experiencing her behavior as rude. Here, the judgment that something possesses a certain value is not accompanied by the experience of the value in question.

Second, though some proponents of the model employ the term “judgment” in a broad sense, its use can be misleading because it suggests the involvement of complex cognitive states which are in fact not required for the apprehension of value. When we experience an action as rude or brave, this occurs immediately without the necessity to judge, think, or deliberate about it. Just as we can see the book on the table without having to judge it, so the experience of the value of an object does not require a judgment. Therefore, it is worth examining other models that can capture the evaluative nature of the apprehension of value but with fewer over-intellectualizing connotations.

Moreover, this model downplays the fact that to apprehend a value is a way of being receptive toward it and affected by it. This feature is captured by Mulligan’s expression “being struck by value” (2009) which, in my view, suggests the proximity of the apprehension of value to the family of the affective and perceptual states in which we are sensitive to certain features of reality.

### 3.2 Emotion

The second model endorsed mainly by Tappolet (2000, 191) interprets the apprehension of value in terms of emotion. This model has the virtue of emphasizing the affective nature of the consciousness of value. However, among the wide family of the affective states, it chooses the wrong candidate.

The first set of objections focuses on crucial differences between the intentional structure exhibited by the apprehension of value, on the one hand, and by the emotions, on the other. These objections have been formulated against perceptual models of the emotions (De Monticelli 2020, 278; Engelsen 2018, 240; Mulligan 2009, 2010; Reinach 2017, 211; Scheler 1973, 257; Vendrell Ferran 2008, 203). To begin, against what perceptual models claim, there is no one-to-one correspondence between emotions and values. Different and even opposite emotions may arise in relation to a single value. We can admire something good, but we can also envy it. Second, it is possible to apprehend a value without simultaneously experiencing an emotion. We can experience something as unfair without feeling indignation. Third, to apprehend a value is neither appropriate nor inappropriate but something that takes place or not, while the emotions have appropriateness conditions regarding the apprehended evaluative properties and regarding the “fit” of these properties to the non-evaluative properties of the object (fear is appropriate if the feared object embodies a danger, but inappropriate if its target is inoffensive). In short, emotions might be directed toward values, but as these objections show, they cannot be responsible for their apprehension.

The second set of objections can be derived from their distinctive ontologies. The apprehension of value and the emotions differ in how they occupy time. Emotions are mental episodes that stretch over time, have a course of development, and are constituted of temporal parts. Each of these parts might differ from the others substantially: for instance, the beginning of an emotional episode of indignation might differ from its end in terms of focus, bodily involvement, intensity, depth, etc. By contrast, the apprehension of value has a minimal temporal duration. Though we can repeatedly apprehend a situation as unfair, the apprehension itself is something that occurs at once (I develop this point in section 4b).

According to the third set of objections, there are substantial differences regarding their phenomenology.<sup>6</sup> First, emotions have bodily moments usually linked to expressive movements. By virtue of these moments, we can see the anger in the other's face, the sadness in their languid movements, etc. By contrast, insofar as no emotion is involved, we cannot see in the other's expression that she apprehends a situation as fair or unfair, just as we cannot see what she perceives or thinks about it.<sup>7</sup> Second, while emotions have a focus on the experiencing subject (partly because they have bodily moments and are sensorily experienced), the apprehension of value is focused on the targeted object. This focus on the object is the reason why we are able to apprehend values independently of the state of the experiencing subject, i.e., we see the cheerfulness of a field of flowers despite our being sad. Third, emotions are experienced as something that happens to us, something we "suffer" (as reflected in the classical word "passion"). They are forms through which we respond to our environment. By contrast, the apprehension of values has the character of an activity of the mind, something we do, though not necessarily something we *intend* to do. To apprehend a value is a form of being receptive and open toward the world. Moreover, when we are in the grip of an emotion, the world appears according to the emotion we experience. Emotions might sometimes be extremely dysfunctional in epistemic terms and obfuscate our cognitive capacities. If in the middle of an episode of sadness, I receive some good news, it is possible that I do not fully grasp its positive value on account of being in the grip of sadness.<sup>8</sup> In comparison, in apprehending a value, we have the feeling of being in contact with an objective aspect of reality (though the apprehension of value is not infallible).

### 3.3 Perception

The third model conceptualizes the apprehension of value in terms of a *sui generis* perception that is comparable but not reducible to sensory perception. In this respect, Audi defends the existence of a "moral perception", i.e., a perception of moral properties. Moral properties and perceptual properties (e.g., colors, textures) are perceptible though in different forms. As Audi puts it, not all that is perceptible is a perceptual property (2013, 35). By resorting to the model of perception, this model captures the immediate cognitive character and the experiential dimension of the apprehension of value without reducing it to judgment or emotional response. However, there are three reasons why I think we should resist adopting such a model.

<sup>6</sup> These differences explain why the phenomenology of the apprehension of value might differ not only from the phenomenology of the emotions but also from that of bodily feelings. Thus, as stated by Drummond (2009), one can experience pain during a medical procedure while simultaneously appraising the treatment positively since it will improve one's health.

<sup>7</sup> According to a further argument provided by Mulligan, while emotions can be classified according to their hedonic valence as pleasant or unpleasant (e.g., fear is unpleasant, joy is pleasant), the apprehension of value is hedonically neutral (2010, 481). However, given that emotions do not always exhibit a specific hedonic valence (there are neutral surprises), nor does the apprehension of value always lack a hedonic phenomenology, we should think of this argument as a question of frequency rather than as a clear-cut criterion to distinguish between both states. Indeed, the "what-it-is-like" of the apprehension of something ugly differs from the "what-it-is-like" of the apprehension of something beautiful and we find the latter preferable to the former partly because of this difference in their phenomenology.

<sup>8</sup> However, emotions might fulfill other kinds of epistemic functions. For instance, if I apprehend the unfairness of an action and this triggers indignation, the indignation can reinforce my apprehension of the situation as unfair by making me attend to its salient features so that I can repeatedly experience the unfairness.

First, the fact that value properties are experienceable and can be apprehended by our mind does not automatically make them the object of a perception, not even a perception of *sui generis* kind. Though perception is the dominant model to think about experience, not everything experienceable is perceptible, nor are all forms of apprehension perceptions. That is, to claim that values are experienceable and can be the object of an apprehension does not necessarily commit us to the model of perception.

Second, there is an intrinsic link between the apprehension of value and typical affective episodes. More specifically, the apprehension of values calls, demands, and motivates us to respond affectively to the value in question (Scheler 1973, 257). For instance, in apprehending the bravery of an action, we feel the demand to like and approve it and to respond to it with admiration. In apprehending the rudeness of a comment, we are called to respond with disapproval, dislike, rejection, and indignation. This intrinsic motivational link, as well as the intricate ways in which these different states appear together in experience, suggest that the apprehension of value itself can belong to the family of the affective.

Finally, and more compellingly, apprehending a value and perceiving an object are both forms of being receptive toward reality, but only the former exhibits a feature common to all affective states. What is this feature? To decide whether a state belongs to the family of the affective, we have to look at its intentional structure. States belonging to the affective family involve an evaluative presentation of reality. (The origins of this view can be found in the Brentanian and early phenomenological tradition.) In affective states, we are “affected” such that reality is presented under an “evaluative light” according to which some features are made more salient than others so that we can orient ourselves in action and thought. Affective states involve a relation to values: they present reality not in neutral terms but imbued with evaluative properties.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, in perception, we are affected by reality but not in evaluative terms. This difference is the reason why we interpret sentences like “This object is cold” as indicating perception and sentences like “This object is disgusting” as indicating the existence of an affective state. Put together, these reasons suggest a move from the model of perception to one in which the apprehension of value is interpreted in affective terms.

### 3.4 Feeling

The fourth model endorsed by (De Monticelli 2018, 2020; Drummond 2009; Engelsen 2018; Mulligan 2009, 2010; Steinbock 2014, and Vendrell Ferran 2008) conceptualizes the apprehension of value in terms of intentional feeling.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the previous models, this model can account for key features of the apprehension of value.

<sup>9</sup> In each affective state, the relation to values takes a different form. For instance, moods are responsible for the values we are *more susceptible* to apprehend (in euphoria we are more sensitive to experience the positive values of the beautiful, the funny, the hilarious, etc. than negative ones); in emotions we *respond* to the apprehended values (fear responds to a danger); sentiments are *forms of regarding* others with personal value (in love we see the beloved in a positive light); in general feelings (tiredness, vitality) we *live through a bodily-felt experience in which we apprehend the powers of life* as increasing or decreasing.

<sup>10</sup> A similar idea can be found in authors who do not belong to the phenomenological tradition such as Johnston. Though he uses the term “affect” to describe a form of engagement which makes us able to see a person, animal or situation as appealing or repellent, his model is closer to the model of feeling than to the model of emotions which he considers to arise typically “after” one is drawn to or repelled by something (2001, 182).

Unlike the models of judgment and perception, respectively, the model of feeling can explain the affective nature of the apprehension of value. Intentional feelings exhibit the hallmark of all states belonging to the family of the affective, in that objects (in the broad sense of the term) are imbued with values.

Moreover, the model of feeling can account for the affective nature of the apprehension of value without encountering the problems of the model of emotion. In fact, proponents of this model distinguish in different ways the apprehension of value from the emotional responses. Drummond and Steinbock, each in their own way, conceive of the feeling of value as one of the moments involved in the emotional experience, while De Monticelli, Engelsen, Mulligan, and Vendrell Ferran regard the feeling of value as logically prior to the emotional response.

In addition, the model can also account for the differences between “intentional feelings” responsible for apprehending values and other kind of affective states. As noted by Drummond (2009), the intentional feelings are distinct from “bodily feelings” which are not intentional. On the basis of their intentional structure, one can distinguish them also from moods which have been regarded either as non-intentional or as exhibiting an intentionality distinct in kind (e.g., Kriegel 2019), and from sentiments which are described as forms of regard (in hate the other is presented as evil, but hate does not apprehend the evil).

Finally, the model of feeling can account for the experiential dimension of the apprehension of value without reducing it to perception. For the proponents of the model of feeling, evaluative properties belong to a domain of reality which is experienceable but whose experience cannot be explained in terms of perception. Values have their own mode of givenness and evidence which cannot be explained in terms of perception.

If these considerations are right, the best way to conceptualize the originary consciousness of value is in terms of intentional feelings. The model of feeling is thus preferable to its alternatives.

## 4 The Feeling of Value: Basic Features

The model of feeling is not unitary. It has been endorsed in different versions among which there are points of convergence, but also intriguing disagreements and aspects which require further elucidation. In this section, I will examine the structure of VF and its main features by scrutinizing some claims about its nature which can be found in current research. In so doing, I will develop my own account of how to understand VF.

### 4.1 Experience

It seems a widely accepted claim among proponents of the model that VF is a specific mode of the experience of values. The arguments provided in Sect. 2 corroborate this thesis: though it is possible to know about values through other means (by testimony, applying rules, deduction, etc.), it is only through feeling that we apprehend and experience them.



## 4.2 Foundation

Is VF founded upon other forms of consciousness or is a primordial form of intentionality not founded upon other states? Following Scheler (1973, 18), De Monticelli (2020, 275) and Steinbock (2014, 10) argue that VF is a primordial form of consciousness not founded upon other forms of consciousness. By contrast, inspired by Husserl, Drummond (2009) regards VF as founded. In particular, he argues that the feeling of value entails a moment that presents its object (in the broad sense) as having certain non-evaluative properties.

Though the Schelerian view is attractive, the Husserlian view has stronger argumentative force. My argument for the latter view can be derived from the ontology of evaluative properties (for this ontology, see Meinong 2020, 72). Value properties are higher-order properties which are founded on non-evaluative properties of an object. The beauty of a bouquet of flowers depends on some properties of the flowers (e.g., color, shape, etc., and their combination). If we change these non-evaluative properties of the flowers, the evaluative properties of the bouquet might change. The bouquet might stop being beautiful. It might even turn ugly. Similarly, the unfairness of a situation is founded on non-evaluative properties of the situation (e.g., actions of punishment, innocent person, etc.).

If this view of value properties is correct, then, the apprehension of values (as higher-order properties) presupposes the apprehension of the non-evaluative properties upon which they are based. Put otherwise, the originary consciousness of the value of an object (VF) presupposes other forms of consciousness of the object (perceiving, imagining, remembering, etc.). In order to feel the beauty of the bouquet, we have to perceive, imagine, remember, etc. the colors, shapes, etc. of the flowers. In order to feel the unfairness of a situation, we have first to perceive, imagine, remember, etc. the non-evaluative properties of the situation. In a nutshell, the feeling of the value of an object is based and depends on the consciousness of other properties of the object.

This order of foundation is logical rather than temporal, because these different forms of consciousness might be given together in experience. Moreover, they might imbue each other. My apprehension of the beauty of the bouquet is based on the perception of the flowers, their colors and forms, but at the same time the experience of beauty might penetrate how I come to perceive the bouquet, guiding my attention to certain features so that I perceive the bouquet more accurately and experience its beauty in an intensified form.

## 4.3 Irreducibility

VF is not reducible to other forms of consciousness (e.g., perception, judgment, etc.). This claim is accepted by authors who regard VF as primordial as well as those who consider it to be founded on other states. Indeed, though for the latter VF presupposes other forms of consciousness of the object, it is not assimilable to them. According to the view for which I argued above, the feeling of the beauty of the bouquet and the feeling of the unfairness of a situation are not assimilable to the perception, imagining, remembering, etc. of the bouquet or the situation. The value of an object can be apprehended only through feeling. While the feeling is responsible for giving us the evaluative properties of the object, these other forms of consciousness present us the object and its features (color, shape, movement, form, etc.) in different modes (as present, not being there, as belonging to the past, etc.).

#### 4.4 Evaluative Properties

In the expression “feeling of value”, feeling indicates an achievement of the mind and is employed as a “success term”. What exactly is apprehended by VF? The content of VF is an evaluative property, but evaluative properties come in different kinds. “Thin” evaluative properties (e.g., good, bad) can be specified in different directions, while “thick” evaluative properties (e.g., dangerous, rude, beautiful) are specific ways of being good or bad.

De Monticelli, Engelsen, and Mulligan seem to assume that VF discloses “thick” values. Drummond offers a more nuanced account according to which affective experiences are constituted by distinct but not entirely separate moments. Bodily feelings are pleasant or painful states of the organism upon which intentional feelings and emotions are built. In this account, intentional feelings intend “thin” evaluative properties (e.g., unpleasant and unlikely), while emotions in a more determinate way intend “thick” values (e.g., dangerous). For Drummond, concepts such as danger can only be understood by referring to certain feelings of distress such as those we experience in the emotion of fear: “to understand the concept of ‘danger’ is to understand that the dangerous is apprehended as dangerous in fear; it is to say, in other words, that actually to experience danger is to experience a feeling of a particular kind of distress at the presence of a set of non-axiological properties that could cause my physical or psychological harm, the kind of distress we call ‘fear’” (Drummond 2009).

While agreeing with Drummond that affective experiences entail different moments and that the moment of feeling can be present while the emotion is missing, I have a reservation about his view. I do not see why evaluative concepts have to be explained by necessarily resorting to emotions. His model works well for the concept of danger which is clearly connected to the emotion of fear. However, it is less clear how it works with evaluative concepts such as banal, sublime, charming, etc., for which no specific emotion can be invoked. As a result, I am inclined to think that the richness of our evaluative concepts cannot be explained in terms of the limited number of human emotions. If the connection between thin evaluative concepts and emotions is weaker than Drummond suggests, perhaps the emotions play a less substantial role in our understanding of such concepts.

The question whether VF apprehends thick or thin values requires further elucidation. One possibility would be to further develop Drummond’s view taking into account the mentioned reservation about the strong tie between VF and the emotions. However, one could also regard the reservation as leaving the door open for the idea that VF might in fact disclose a wide variety of thick values, just as seeing and hearing might present a wide variety of objects.

#### 4.5 Acquaintance

Proponents of the model agree that VF is a form of intuition which involves an epistemic contact with reality. However, it has been scarcely investigated how to understand the specific kind of cognitive achievement. Engelsen (2018) describes it in terms of “knowledge of what-it-is-like”, while Mulligan argues that it is a form of “acquaintance” (2010). Both forms are non-propositional forms of knowledge, but one cannot be reduced to the other.

There are good reasons to accept the claim that VF’s cognitive achievement cannot be described in terms of acquiring propositional knowledge about values. To feel a value is not

the same as knowing truths about it. We can have the experience of something being unfair and though this experience might lead us to propositional truths about the unfairness, the experience itself is not reducible to these truths. Inversely, we can acquire knowledge about a value without having experienced it. Even if we have never experienced unfairness, it is possible for us to know about it (by reading books, hearing the testimony of others, etc.) and apply this knowledge to judge certain situations as unfair. In short, to experience a value and to acquire propositional knowledge about it are two distinct kinds of cognitive achievement.

Is VF's cognitive gain "knowledge of what-it-is-like"? Resorting to Jackson's well-known thought experiment about Mary—who, despite knowing everything about colors, when she leaves the black and white room learns something new about them—Engelsen construes an analogous case for the feelings of values in which feeling is to value what vision is to experienced color (2018, 243). The truth of the analogy is that the experience of value adds something new to the propositional knowledge we have about it. However, we should not take the analogy with Mary at face value. Mary does experience colors for the first time when she leaves her black and white room, but she makes this experience on the basis of her previously acquired propositional knowledge which enables her to recognize and identify colors. An analogous scenario for Mary experiencing values is possible and, also in this case, she would experience values on the basis of her previously acquired propositional knowledge about them (for instance, when we learn about values via education, etc.). However, this is not always the case because VF can put us in contact with values even when we have no propositional knowledge about them.

If these considerations are right, we have good reason to follow the lead of Mulligan (2010, 486) in regarding the cognitive achievement of VF as acquaintance with values. There are three arguments for this view. First, this suggestion captures important features of VF: It implies an immediate contact with reality; it can be foundational for propositional knowledge; and it does not presuppose experience. Second, this acquaintance admits degrees of precision and clarity. The value of an object can be felt with more or less clarity, just as an object can be perceived with more or less clarity. Third, acquaintance requires the existence of favorable conditions such as having disconnected from possible sources of deception (the influence of others, inherited valuations, etc.).

#### 4.6 Punctual Occurrence

Is VF a punctual episode or an enduring disposition? Mulligan, who is the only one to have posed this question, argues that VF is an episode of coming to be affectively acquainted with values which might mark the beginning of a state or disposition (2009). For him, an enduring affective acquaintance with values is possible. In Engelsen (2018, 240), it is suggested that VF is a mental episode distinct from the emotional states. To elucidate how VF occupies time, I will resort to a series of criteria which can be found in the ontology of mind and, in particular, in Mourelatos (1978, 423).

A first possibility to rule out is the category of states (this term is employed here in a specific sense). First, mental states exist over time, while VF has a minimal temporal duration. We can feel the rudeness or bravery of an action. We can feel these values repeatedly, but this feeling does not stretch over time. Second, while mental states have parts, VF, due to its minimal temporal extension, does not. Third, the parts that comprise states are usually heterogeneous, while VF is homogeneous. Fourth, states reflect a mental condition, while VF

has the character of an activity of the mind (it need not be an activity realized intentionally, but activities are something that our mind does rather than something that happens to us).

Mental processes and mental developments can also be ruled out. Processes are activities made of parts which constitute a whole. For instance, reasoning is a process made of parts and in each of these parts we are reasoning. By contrast, VF is not made of parts and has a minimal temporal duration. Developments are accomplishments which have a duration, but unlike processes their parts are not homogeneous. An example of development is to conclude. To come to a conclusion is something that happens over a segment of time and it is made of parts, but its parts are inhomogeneous (the final part of coming to a conclusion in which we accomplish something is distinct from the beginning). By contrast, VF is homogeneous and does not stretch over time.

The most plausible way to interpret VF is as a punctual occurrence. Punctual occurrences are achievements which can be dated, but which occur in a single moment without stretching over time. The phenomenology of the feeling of value is closer to the phenomenology of other occurrences such as noticing and realizing which happen at a singular moment, rather than to extended processes or inhomogeneous developments. In addition, like other punctual occurrences, it indicates an achievement (VF makes us acquainted with values).

#### 4.7 Receptivity

The last question concerns how to place VF within the powers of the human mind. Drummond describes VF in terms of being a form of reception and response toward values, while De Monticelli, Engelsen, and Mulligan describe intentional feelings as a form of receptivity toward values and distinguish this from the emotional responses (the distinction can be found already in the work of realist phenomenologists).

As argued in Sect. 3, the apprehension of values should be distinguished from the emotional responses. My proposal here is to use the terms “receptivity” and “responsivity” non-synonymously in order to reflect this distinction. Though I consider both to be forms of sensitivity toward values, the abilities required for one and the other are of a distinct nature. The former involves the ability to be open to the apprehension of values, while the latter requires us to be able to react appropriately toward these apprehended values (e.g., by having the right response, by responding with the appropriate intensity and duration, etc.).

The specific form of sensitivity exhibited by VF can be subjected to refinement and amelioration. It can also be exacerbated and deteriorated. It might be biased by affective states (e.g., moods such as euphoria or depression might influence the values we might apprehend) and by inherited or previously formed opinions and beliefs. On certain occasions, this sensitivity can be impaired. Phenomenologists employed the expression “value blindness” to refer to different forms in which this power might be lacking (Pfänder 1973b, 133; Scheler 1973, 193; von Hildebrand 1982, 44–55; Mulligan 2009). Just as one might be impaired from hearing and seeing, or tasting and smelling, and experiencing emotions, so one might be impaired in different forms and to varying degrees from feeling values. Moreover, VF is subject to individual variations. Persons differ in the degree of accuracy in which a value is felt. Even when two people apprehend the same values in an object, they do not apprehend the same value with the same fine-grainedness and detail. In addition, depending on one’s inclinations, some persons might be more prone to experience certain kinds of values (e.g., the aesthetic) and less so others (e.g., the religious). Finally, VF might be subject to histori-

cal, social, temporal, and cultural conditions (e.g., living in a certain epoch, society, etc. might make us more receptive to some values and less so to others).

## 5 The Feeling of Moral Values

Though different areas of philosophy can benefit from the analysis of the feeling of value provided above, I will focus here in particular on the moral domain. More specifically, my aim is to show how a feeling of value is presupposed by several of our moral experiences such as those mentioned in the introduction. In so doing, I will present in a programmatic manner how the proposed account, when applied to the case of moral values, might contribute to moral phenomenology, i.e., the analysis of the first-person experience of our moral life (Drummond 2007; Drummond and Rinofner-Kriedl 2020, 294; Horgan and Timmons 2005, 55, 2008, 279; Kriegel 2008, 1 and forthc.).

The values apprehended in VF belong to different realms (e.g., aesthetic, religious, vital, etc.), with moral values being just one of them. Though the question of how to distinguish between these different realms is contentious, intuitively when we apprehend a value, we can identify the realm to which it belongs. We know whether we have an experience of a moral value (e.g., bravery, courage, unfairness, cowardice, etc.), a religious value (e.g., sacredness, earthliness, holiness, etc.), an aesthetic value (e.g., elegance, beauty, ugliness, etc.), etc. In the experiences mentioned at the beginning of the paper, we feel the rudeness, the bravery, the unfairness, and the wrongness of certain situations, actions, and our own emotional responses. In these examples, the felt values are apprehended as values pertaining to the moral domain. Their distinctive moral nature can be preliminarily explained as follows. First, moral values are experienced as being articulated around the values of good and bad (regarded as the highest and lowest values of the moral domain just as beauty/ugliness and truth/falsity are the highest and lowest values of the aesthetic and epistemic domains, respectively). A brave action is experienced as good; a cowardly one as bad.

Second, moral values motivate intrinsically moral judgments and actions. The apprehension of an action as courageous motivates the moral judgment that it is praiseworthy and the moral action to commend it. In addition, the feeling of a moral value calls on us to respond in specific ways with emotions and with what can be called “second-order feelings”, i.e., feelings brought about or motivated by the ordinary feeling of value.<sup>11</sup> Thus, feeling the bravery of an action calls us to respond with the emotions of admiration and respect, and with the second-order feelings of approval, liking, and appreciation. Feeling the unfairness of an action motivates moral emotions of indignation, anger, or shame, as well as second-order feelings of disapproval, rejection, and repulsion (moral emotions extend over time, while second-order feelings like VF are punctual occurrences which can take place repeatedly, but have a minimal temporal duration). According to the picture presented here, moral emotions and second-order feelings are based on and presuppose the feeling of moral values. These emotions and second-order feelings are appropriate when the value to which they respond fits the non-evaluative features of the object. In the example above: when the bravery of an action fits the non-evaluative features of this action upon which the bravery is founded (as argued above, VF is founded on other forms of consciousness of the object,

<sup>11</sup> An analogous distinction can be found in von Hildebrand's later works, though by then he describes the apprehension of value not in terms of feeling but as a form of cognition (2016, 368).

though it is not reducible to them). In a nutshell: VF is the *conditio sine qua non* through which these other moral experiences are made possible.

The receptivity toward values motivates our being responsive to them. In particular, the possibility to apprehend moral values is linked to a specific form of receptivity toward them which has been called “consciousness” (e.g., Pfänder 1973a, 55), just as, analogously, taste is a specific sensitivity to values of the aesthetic domain. Persons lacking this kind of sensitivity can nonetheless know about these values through other means such as education, the testimony of others, or the guiding role of exemplars.

Finally, moral values are experienced as values which pertain to persons’ acts and character. As stated by Steinbock (2014, 13), the moral domain can be understood as the domain which evokes the irreducible interpersonal dimension of experience and opens or closes the sphere of persons.

In the proposed account, the feeling of moral values is neither a feeling of what it is right to do (or not to do), nor a feeling of an obligation to do (or not to do) something. Questions about right/wrong and about moral obligations are nomological questions which cannot be fully answered by resorting to VF.<sup>12</sup> However, these phenomena might be interrelated. For instance, VF might motivate a feeling of obligation or it might be the basis for judgments that indicate to us what is right. Also in these cases, the feeling of a moral value is more basic than these other moral experiences.

This feeling fulfills a cognitive function, which I described above in terms of acquaintance with values. This acquaintance can help us to acquire truths about the moral realm (though, as already mentioned, it is not the only way in which we can gain propositional knowledge about moral issues). For instance, the experience of unfairness can pave the way to obtain propositional truths about unfairness.

Though these issues deserve further development, I bring them up here only to demonstrate that VF is a central aspect of our moral life. VF is presupposed by several of our moral emotions and feelings; it is involved in moral judgments about what is right and what our obligations are; and it can be foundational for moral knowledge. If these considerations are right, then the feeling of value fulfills a much more significant function in the understanding of our moral life than current moral phenomenology has attributed to it. While moral phenomenology has been mainly concerned with the analysis of moral emotions, the description of moral judgments, and the explanation of moral action, I propose here a shift of attention toward VF as a more basic state. In this regard, the provided account should be understood in the frame of what Kriegel calls an “expansive moral phenomenology” (forthc.), according to which we should admit not only moral emotion and agency, but also other kinds of moral experiences.

## 6 The Introspection and the Heterogeneity Challenges

Before finishing, I wish to address two possible challenges against the thesis of an intentional feeling of values.

<sup>12</sup> See Pfänder 1973b, 141; Reinach 2017, 37; Drummond and Rinofner-Kreidl 2020, 291. Engelsen describes value qualities as “proto-normative” precisely because they direct the subject toward certain actions (2018, 235).

## 6.1 The Introspection Challenge

The introspection challenge runs as follows:

P1: Mental states such as emotion, perception or belief are accessible via introspection.

P2: When we turn toward ourselves in introspection, we cannot identify something like VF.

C: Given that we cannot find VF via introspection, VF probably does not exist.

This challenge against VF has been raised by proponents of the perceptual model of the emotions, such as Mitchell (2019, 16) and Yaegashi (2019, 76).

It is certainly true that unlike emotion, perception or belief, VF is not easily accessible via introspection. However, to accept P1 and P2 does not commit us to accepting C. As I will demonstrate, the reason why VF cannot be found via introspection is not because it does not exist, but rather because two of its basic features make it difficult to find via introspection.

First, if my characterization of VF as a punctual occurrence is correct, then it is clear that the difficulties in accessing it via introspection are due to its short-lived character. Given that it does not stretch over time, VF cannot be easily found via introspection in the moment in which it occurs. As is the case with other punctual occurrences (e.g., noticing), we can retrospectively identify its occurrence, for instance, by claiming that we reacted with indignation because we felt the unfairness of the situation. In this case, we can identify not only that we apprehended the unfairness but also that the unfairness is an evaluative property which pertains to the moral domain (we identify the unfairness as bad, as motivating moral judgments, actions, and emotions, and as related to the sphere of persons' acts).

The second reason why we cannot easily access VF via introspection in the moment in which it occurs is that VF often triggers emotional responses. Unlike VF, emotions have an accentuated phenomenology: emotions have bodily moments, can be usually classified as pleasant or unpleasant, are felt with different levels of intensity, and imply a focus on the self which makes them more perceptible than VF which lacks bodily moments and is focused on the object. Moreover, unlike VF, which is punctual, emotions occupy stretches of time and have a course of development which entails different phases. Both features make emotions more salient in introspection than VF. Thus, it seems natural that we focus attention on emotions and that it is precisely this focus that hinders an awareness of VF. If you feel the unfairness of a situation and this leads to an emotional episode of indignation, you will tend to focus on the indignation rather than on the feeling of unfairness because the bodily involvement, the unpleasantness, the intensity, and the extended temporal duration make the indignation more salient to your mind.

These arguments show that the feeling of value is not an ad hoc postulate introduced solely for theoretical purposes, but a mental episode in its own right. If we regard as existent only phenomena that are easily accessible to introspection, we will miss important aspects of our mental life such as VF which are not easily found in inner perception.

## 6.2 The Heterogeneity Challenge

The heterogeneity challenge poses the following scenario regarding the class of "intentional feelings":

P1: VF is an intentional feeling which targets evaluative properties.

P2: The term “feeling” is employed also in sentences like: I “feel” the depth or intensity of my sadness.

P3: In P2 the feeling is intentional but its object is an affective state rather than an evaluative property.

C: There are two subclasses within the class of the “intentional feelings”.<sup>13</sup>

This conclusion leaves us with the following alternatives. According to the first, we are dealing with the same kind of intentional feeling, though each time it targets a different object (in P1 it targets evaluative properties, in P2 it targets affective states). This option has the advantage that it considers the class of intentional feelings to be unitary.<sup>14</sup> The problem is that the intentional feelings involved in P1 and P2 differ not only regarding the kind of targeted objects (evaluative properties vs. affective states), but also regarding the way in which each one of these feelings occupies time. The feeling involved in P1 is a punctual occurrence, while the feeling involved in P2 extends over time. The feeling of the depth or intensity of the sadness can extend over time, is made of different and heterogeneous moments, and has the character of a mental process. Moreover, both feelings differ in terms of their cognitive achievements. The intentional feeling involved in P1 makes us acquainted with values, while the intentional feeling involved in P2 makes us acquainted with phenomenal qualities of affective states. Against this backdrop, it seems more plausible to accept a second alternative according to which the class of the intentional feelings is heterogeneous: in P1 and P2 we are dealing with different subclasses of “intentional feelings” which, despite both of them being intentional, differ in terms of their targeted objects, temporal duration, and cognitive achievements.

## 7 Conclusions

This paper was concerned with experiences in which we have an immediate consciousness of value such as when we claim to hear the rudeness in a comment, to see the bravery or unfairness of an action, and to feel the wrongness of our own emotional responses. I have argued that this consciousness of value is better conceptualized in terms of intentional feeling, described the structure of this feeling by examining its basic features, and examined its function in the moral domain. In so doing, I have provided an account of how to understand VF as the ability to apprehend the evaluative dimension of life, and proposed a shift in moral phenomenology’s attention from the emotions to intentional feelings.

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<sup>13</sup> For this distinction, see Scheler 1973, 256.

<sup>14</sup> Though my concern here is with the class of intentional feelings, Ratcliffe has provided an argument in favor of the unity of intentional and non-intentional feelings (bodily feelings) that goes in the direction of this alternative. In particular, he claims: “Feelings of the body and feelings towards objects in the world are two sides of the same coin” (2005, 48–49).



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