

## **INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

Axiology or 'Theory of Value' has come to be treated as an important subject in the discipline of philosophy. It has taken its place alongside the traditional branches, such as logic, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Aesthetics and Philosophy of Religion. It would seem that perhaps all kinds of studies of value should now be classified under the general heading of Axiology. Thus, Ethics and Aesthetics are best treated as subsidiary branches of the field of value in its broadest sense.

Historically, the importance of 'value' in philosophical studies has been recognised very slowly and gradually. Moreover, its philosophic history is obscure. In the light of subsequent development, however, we may trace its emergence to the Platonic Doctrine (In Republic VI) of the idea of Good. When Plato conceived the Good as the culmination of the ideal world, and as the principle which was to unify, systematize, and organise all the other 'forms' he was really putting 'value' above 'being' conceiving it as the supreme principle of explanation, and expressing the same thought as Lotze, when he declared that the beginning of metaphysics lies in Ethics.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Hasting James, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.12, p. 584.

Since the development of value by Plato, after a long time, the investigation of value was carried on only in Germany. Even here the progress was very slow. The first, probably to see that there was a problem, was F.E. Beneke (1799-1854). The only empirical psychologist among the German philosophers of his time, he stated that "If the science of moral is practical the notion of value lies at the root of it."<sup>2</sup> He lays it down that the value which we attribute to a thing is determined by the pleasure which it has excited in us, and he makes the whole of Ethics depend on the concept of value.

Schopenhauer (1788-1860), by raising the question of value of life as a whole, emphasizes the importance of values. F.W. Nietzsche (1844-1900) effectively drew attention to the transformation of values, and set himself before he died, to bring about a transvaluations of all accepted values.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of value began to get matured in the 1890's in the writings of Alexius Menong and Christian Von Ehrenfels, two Austrian followers of Franz Brentano. The general theory of value has some influence in Great Britain, in the works of Bernard Basanquet, W.R. Sorley, J.M. Mackenzie,

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2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

John Laird, G.E. Moore, and J.N. Finlay. But rather less than elsewhere, for, on the whole, British philosophers have held to more traditional terms like 'Good' and 'Right'. But it received an excited welcome in the United States just before the World War I. The idea was taken by Hugo Munsterberg and W.M. Urban in 1906, and Ralph Barton Perry, John Dewey, D.H. Parker, D.W. Prall, E.W. Hall and others continued the tradition. Later, it was refurbished by S.C. Pepper and Paul W. Taylor. This wide ranging discussion in terms of 'value' and 'valuations' subsequently spread to psychology, the social sciences, the humanities and even to ordinary discourse.<sup>4</sup>

Values have played an important role not only in the area of ethics but also in religion. Bereft of values, religions are forms without content. Religion is the way to realise the supreme value in man's life called liberation or salvation. But it also opens the way for man to realise other values such as the moral, social, and the cultural that enrich his earthly existence and make it meaningful. The great religions of the world have assigned a high place to moral conduct and to the cultivation of moral values. They have also laid utmost emphasis on the cultivation and development of social values which are necessary for the solidarity of society and for the promotion of its well being and development.

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4. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 7 & 8, Macmillan Pub. Co., New York, 1972, p. 229.

This fact is well illustrated in the Bible, the Koran, the Gita and in some other religious scriptures of the world.

Thus, true religion does not admit any kind of polarity between spiritual life and secular life or between religious values and secular values. They are distinct but not opposed to each other. Religion on the one hand, opens the way for man to the divine and, on the other hand, it activates him to realise the other values that sustain and enrich his earthly existence. Thus, religion embraces both dimensions of man's existence – the spiritual as well as the secular.

But in spite of its involvement in the secular pursuits and values of life, true religion does not lose its touch with the Divine who constitutes the supreme concern of man. This is the unchanging and the everlasting truth of religion. All other values, namely religious, moral, social and cultural etc. are subject to change but the supreme truth of religion remains unchanged.

In a historically given religion, its religious beliefs and ritual system cannot be served from its way of life, the praxis, that it advocates. After all, religion is not merely a ritual system but also a manner of living that at once takes into consideration a set of values that have their impact on the code of conduct. Thus, morality and religion are indissolubly related, nay more, the one is schematized

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on the other; it only depends upon one's perspective as to what schematizes on what.

Secondly, the theme that I have chosen for my study is not a general one; it is with special reference to the New Testament. The New Testament to the Christian, is the basis of the Christian doctrine. Again, before it ever becomes a doctrinal foundation, it is first of all a book that sustains the way of life of a community. Jesus and thereafter his disciples, in particular, St. Paul, were primarily ethical teachers rather than 'cerebrally' - oriented philosophers. Quality of life in the context of a religious metaphysics is the core of ethical teaching. The New Testament thus has been a book of life and practical living to millions of people. Thirdly, the New Testament is a piece of world's religious heritage and literature that has been the undercurrent of philosophies and cultures, especially in the West.

All the New Testament twenty seven books were originally written in Greek. On the face of it this may surprise us. Aramaic, a language akin to Hebrew, was the mother-tongue of Jesus, and though he was probably able to speak Greek, it was in Aramaic, not Greek, that he preached and taught. The Greek of the New Testament is called 'Common Greek'. This Koine, or common Greek, was in Christ's time the international language of the day, very much as English is today.

The New Testament Greek is the common Greek with a Semitic accent. This is what we might have expected; for all the New Testament writers, save Luke, were Jews. Some of these Semitic elements in their Greek are due to the influence of the Hebrew scriptures and to the Aramaic spoken by Jesus and his first followers. More often, the Semitic case of New Testament Greek springs from the fact that the Bible which most early Christians used was the Septuagint – a literal translation of the Hebrew old testament made at Alexandria two or three centuries before Christ.

Now the question arises, why should a student of philosophy be interested in studying the nature of values in New Testament? It is true that one may begin studying the New Testament with a purely literary concern and end up by valuing it for a quite different reason. There are others who, finding the essence of Christianity in 'Christ's views about God and the sermon on the Mount', think that it is in these that the value of the New Testament lies. In the New Testament, we find the highest and purest 'message of God and the good'.

The New Testament values are supposed to be the revelation of God. Therefore they are theonomous in nature, and because of this divine nature, they play important role in the life of the individual, the society and the nation as

a whole. Therefore, the study of values in the New Testament cannot be separated from the religious meaning of the text itself.

In any sacred text, be it the Geeta of the Hindus, or the Koran of the Muslims, or the Bible of the Christians, it is the value system that plays the central role. Seen in this light, values are central to religion and these values play a pivotal role.

This dissertation is a textual study. Therefore, all the references from the text has been quoted and inserted. Only some secondary references have been used in the footnotes to outline its scope of research and to substantiate the text of the New Testament. The dissertation consists of the following chapters:

The first chapter is entitled the Methodological Issue. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to spell out and elaborate the method of studying a religious text. A religious text is neither a purely historical nor purely scientific document, though often it does reflect a socio-cultural history of the times. The attempt to study the religious texts with the application of scientific and historical categories has often led the positivists to denounce religion as a pseudo science. In this dissertation, I wish to point

out that the study of religion requires altogether a different method. Historically speaking, some theologians have treated sacred text as containing scientific truths. Hence, the conflict between science and religion. On the other hand, I wish to point out that religion does not advance either a scientific or a historical theory; it has its mooring elsewhere. The conflict between science and religion is only apparent and not genuine. It is the result of wrong presuppositions: Science, history and religion belong to different realms. The conflict appears to be there only when we try to understand the one in terms of categories appropriate to the other. In short, the method and categories applied in the study of a religious text are radically different from those employed in scientific and historical enquiry. The chapter is devoted to an explication of these methods and categories. The positivistic denunciation of religion will also be examined in this connection.

The second chapter is entitled the New Testament values. This chapter is devoted to an exhaustive elaboration of value system of the New Testament. Broadly speaking, all the New Testament values such as moral, social, economic and political, have to be elements of the religious values which are theonomous in nature. Therefore, the New Testament values cannot be separated from the religion out of which

they have grown. It is the Christian conviction that no man can reach the ethical heights without the power and faith in God.

The third chapter is entitled the New Testament Fact-Value dichotomy. This chapter begins with an examination of the dichotomy between Fact and Value. The contemporary literature in moral philosophy is replete with discussion of such dichotomy. This problem is examined by considering the five major schools of thought: Naturalism; Intuitionism; Non-cognitivism or Emotivism; Prescriptivism and Descriptivism. All these theories in moral philosophy make claims and counter claims to bring out the different aspect of the dichotomy between Facts and Values. But, in so far as the New Testament values are concerned, the dichotomy does not operate. What is value in the spiritual sense becomes a fact, and what is a fact in spiritual sense becomes a value. Christ reconciles the dichotomy between Facts and Values in order to fulfill his mission of reconciliation between God and man. Christ is the embodiment of Fact and Value in one integrated whole. He has created values and discovered facts, in his own life. Hence, fact and value in the New Testament are inseparable from the concept of God. They have their fulfillment and realisation only in God, and because of this unique feature, the dichotomy in the context of New Testament becomes absurd.

The fourth chapter is entitled Absolute Values and the New Testament. This chapter is devoted to a critical examination of the Absolute values enshrined in the New Testament; values such as Love, Goodness and Truth. These Absolute values are eternal because they refer to an aspect of divine nature itself. We partake of the eternal life in so far as we realise them in our own life. This recognition is indeed the immortal message of the New Testament. These Absolute values are at the core of the New Testament. The New Testament as a holy scripture would be empty without these Absolute values.

The fifth chapter is entitled Values and Religion: New Testament Perspective. In the concluding chapter, I have made an attempt to explore the possibility of the meeting point of religions. In order to do this, I have discussed the general problems of the identity of purpose that religions share. Their belief and ritual system have been discussed since every religion has invariably such systems. I have discussed the system of symbols that a religion generally has. It is only on the value system that provides common ground between the diverse types of religions. The present study is only an attempt to explore the possibilities of religions coming together.

All religions advocate the same universal and absolute values, although in different ways. Thus, I have made an attempt to argue that the New Testament advocates a set of values both spiritualistic and humanistic in nature and this is true of all other religions.

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