

Chapter (VI)

William K. Frankena: A Digest of Purposive Values; STEPHEN C. PEPPER, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Sep, 1949), pp. 130-132.

This little book on value is put forth as a preview of a larger work yet to be written. It falls into two parts. The first is a psychological discussion, in predominantly behavioristic terms, of purposive behavior, and ends with a "descriptive definition" of such behavior. This is nicely done and interesting, especially the sections on injectives and independent mutations in purposes; and it is not second-hand, though there is an admitted dependence on R. B. Perry and E. C. Tolman. The second part adumbrates a theory of value, with the aid of some more psychology, this time predominantly introspective (Mr. Pepper says this shift to an introspective treatment. makes for "greater precision"; is this, perhaps, an admission that value. cannot be dealt with in behavioristic terms?

Mr. Pepper begins his theory of value by assuming that values are contained in purposes (pp. 1, 49). These values he calls purposive. He does not explicitly say that he holds all values to be purposive (i.e., that "value" can always be defined in terms of purpose); but he seems to think that they are not, for he also speaks of "social value" as if it were a non-purposive kind of value, (is this distinction identical with the "equivocation of value" insisted on in some of his earlier papers?). However this may be, he offers this "descriptive" definition of purposive value: "positive and negative purposive values are the positive and negative features contained in purposive

activity" (p. 49). Little is done to show that this definition is not arbitrary, except that it is said to be descriptive; in fact, it is introduced as a simple declaration. Yet he clearly does not intend it to be arbitrary (p. 77). But then one would like Mr. Pepper to show that it is "derived from descriptions that are as nearly true to the facts covered as is possible" or at least that it corresponds accurately to the usages of ordinary discourse. About all he does on this head, however, is to argue, none too cogently, it seems to me, that "gratuitous, satisfactions" though unsought, are really purposive values.

Mr. Pepper goes on to distinguish three types of purposive value: affective value, conative value, and achievement value. This means, I take it, that "x is (purposively) good" has three senses; in one it may be defined in terms of pleasure or pain, in the second in terms of wanting or non-wanting, and in the third in terms of success or frustration. Then, after dealing with actual, potential, and conditional objects of value, Mr. Pepper takes up evaluation, particularly the question of standards, of which he finds three sets corresponding to the three kinds of purposive value. This discussion ends with a kind of hedonism: "the ancient pleasure standard is after all justified as the supreme standard of value in individual purposive conduct" (p. 84). The standards of affective value (intensity, duration, and number) take precedence over those of conative and achievement value. In this connection Mr. Pepper insists that matters of value are matters of fact, as, of course, they will be on his definition of value. But when he sets out to show just how an "ought" comes out of an "is" (pp. 81-82), his account is not clear for it does not include a definition of "ought," unless he

intends that that we should adapt his definition of value to the term "ought" also. (In general, it seems to me, he does not state his definitions explicitly enough).

It is also to be noted that in connection with judgments of value, Mr. Pepper distinguishes between the judgment itself, which he says is simply the "anticipatory set" of the organism, and its expression in a verbal sentence, which he holds is ordinarily "a little purposive act of its own, having as its goal the equating of the customary references of words with the active references of an anticipatory set" (p. 14). Here Mr. Pepper seems to be broaching the sort of view that C. L. Stevenson has recently given of the uses of ethical language. But then one would like Mr. Pepper to elaborate. On the contrary, however, he gives one the impression that he thinks he disposes of the emotive meaning theory of ethical terms in a footnote (p.50), although the distinction he there makes between expressing a liking and asserting that one has it is precisely the one which Ayer and others have insisted on. Perhaps I am misinterpreting Mr. Pepper here; but, if so, the moral is that he has not made clear his position as compared with that of Ayer or Stevenson.

Purposive values Mr. Pepper regards as essentially individual. But he holds that there is another kind of value, social or over-individual, which cannot be defined in purposive terms. What he says here is most interesting; it suggests what he would say about moral value and moral standards. Social value, he insists, represents a point of view from which the individual and his purposes may be appropriately judged, and it is not merely a function or extension of purposive value, as the Greatest Happiness Principle suggests.

However, he does not resort to intuitionism or non-naturalism at this point, as one is tempted to think he should. He does not even consider the possibility of doing so. Instead, he argues that the standard (he does not speak of definition here, but presumably he has some naturalistic definition in mind) of social value is the evolutionary one of conduciveness to the survival of the group. Thus Mr. Pepper arrives at a duality, if not a dualism, with individual ethics and its hypothetical imperatives on the one hand and social ethics and its categorical imperatives on the other (the use of these Kantian terms here is my own). He then goes on to discuss the conflict between them and sketches a conception of a "functional society" in which they may live together.

There are, of course, many questions which can be asked about these views of Mr. Pepper, besides those indicated. But no doubt he is aware of them, and we may end by hoping that he will answer them when he fills out this digest, which we also hope he will do.