

A Deweyan Account
of Extrinsic Value
and
Its Relevance for the Anthropocene

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The concept of intrinsic value has been a subject of both metaethical and normative controversy since G.E. Moore's attempt to elucidate it in 1922. According to Moore, “[t]o say that a kind of value is 'intrinsic' means merely that the question whether a thing possesses it, and in what degree it possesses it depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question”.¹ More specifically, the metaethical issue of intrinsic value permeates the field of environmental ethics, in which intrinsic value is defined either by its independence from the presence of a conscious evaluator as per Moore or by its opposition to instrumental valuing. As further detailed in part 1 below, the adjective may then be used to designate the value of something being valued by X, or that of X having value.

Environmental ethics have been addressing the issue of intrinsic value since the 1970's in an effort to define a new, environmentally-focused ethics that does not rest on the "basic (human) chauvinism" principle identified by Richard Routley as a characteristic of traditional ethics.² The development of such environmental ethics theories occurred in the context of a changing environmental situation after WWII that was initially perceived as an ecological crisis, suggesting its transitory and potentially reversible nature. However, the recent accumulation of scientific facts related to the Earth system has led to a critique of the suitability of the notion of crisis for the description of the current era. Terms now used to describe the environmental situation such as the "new climatic regime" or the "Anthropocene" no longer suggest the notion of a crisis, but rather integrate the global and irreversible nature of modifications imposed on the biosphere and the Earth system by specific human activities, which may alter the Earth's conditions for life, including human life.^{3, 4} Thus, following the early intuitions of Vladimir Vernadsky and James Lovelock & Lynn Margulis according to whom life is a geological force, the notion of Anthropocene emphasizes the recent worldwide extension of the field of human influence from the local or regional levels, while also pointing to the convergence of

¹ George E. Moore, "The Conception of Intrinsic Value," in *Philosophical Studies*, ed. Paul Kegan (London: Routledge, 1922), p. 260.

² Richard Routley, "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic," *Proceedings of the XVth World Congress of Philosophy 1* (1973): 205-10.

³ Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA: Polity, 2017).

⁴ Paul J. Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," *Nature* 415, n° 6867 (2002): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1038/415023a>.

previously incommensurable geological and human timeframes.^{5, 6} Although the geological Anthropocene epoch has not been formally recognized by natural sciences yet, sociology, history, and philosophy have already and sometimes critically taken over the concept. "Anthropocene" is the term I will use to denote the situation that environmental philosophy must presently address.

As argued by some, the capacity of environmental ethics to address the practical challenges of the Anthropocene may have been hampered by metaethical debates regarding the notion of intrinsic value.⁷ John Dewey's "reconstruction of philosophy"⁸, on the other hand, aims at resolving "the separation once set up between theory and practice" by providing the conceptual resources required for the reunification of situations that are indeterminate from a pragmatist perspective.⁹ The contemporary period is frequently cited as one of transition from an energetic and more generally ecological perspective. The uncertainties associated with the current transition to the Anthropocene epoch make it an archetypal example of an indeterminate situation from a pragmatist, Deweyan point of view.

The issue of intrinsic value is highly relevant to Dewey's project, as it reflects his broader stance on the necessity for "[c]hanging conceptions of philosophy".¹⁰ The "[r]econstruction in moral conceptions" necessitated by the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, from which modern physics emerged, is a key element in the development of this new philosophy.¹¹ According to Dewey, the end of the ordered and immutable cosmos described by natural sciences should be acknowledged by ethics, which should accordingly transition from the quest for the "single and final source of law," which represents a prerequisite for the normative developments of

⁵ Vladimir Vernadsky, *La Biosphère* (Paris: Diderot, 1997).

⁶ James E. Lovelock et Lynn Margulis, "Atmospheric Homeostasis by and for the Biosphere: The Gaia Hypothesis," *Tellus* 26, n° 1-2 (1974): 2-10, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2153-3490.1974.tb01946.x>.

⁷ See for example Bryan G. Norton, "Integration or Reduction: Two Approaches to Environmental Values," in *Environmental Pragmatism*, eds. Andrew Light and Eric Katz (London: Routledge, 1996), 105-38.

⁸ John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-1990, MW 12:257).

⁹ MW 12:277-278.

¹⁰ MW 12:80-95.

¹¹ MW 12:173-187.

traditional ethics, to the recognition that "every moral situation is a unique situation having its own irreplaceable good."¹²

In two recently published essays, Levi Tenen attempts to circle the difficulties surrounding intrinsic value by providing an account of extrinsic final value.¹³ He argues that there are warranting normative reasons to value things such as heirlooms and memorabilia "for their own sakes on account of their extrinsic features" rather than just instrumentally.¹⁴ In a third concomitant paper, he expands the application of his account from heirlooms and memorabilia to natural entities, suggesting that they may too "be valuable for their own sakes without having an intrinsic value."¹⁵ While I agree with Tenen that an account of extrinsic final value may represent a way out of the aporias of intrinsic value, the arguments that are leading me to reach this conclusion are quite different from his. Specifically, I believe that Dewey's theory of valuation provides a pragmatist conception of extrinsic final value that is alternative to the conception influenced by Guy Fletcher and Christine Swanton that Tenen develops, and that has more environmental relevance.¹⁶ Therefore, I aim to provide

¹² MW 12:173 and MW 12:74, respectively. It is worth acknowledging that Dewey had accompanying reservations about Enlightenment Era thought and its influence—the fact that science became the measure of the "external world" and that values were, then, said to be "internal," taking on many of the attributes of a purportedly fixed cosmos. There was a sharpened corresponding difference between subjects and objects in both the rationalist and empiricist traditions. This was not perceived by Dewey as positive for ethics, and he actually considered some of the Greek contributions, such as those considering humans as manifestations of natural forces, to be more advantageous. I thank one of the reviewers for this highly relevant insight.

¹³ Levi Tenen, "How Final and Non-Final Valuing Differ," *The Journal of Ethics* 26, n° 4 (2022): 683-704, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-022-09410-9>; "An Account of Extrinsic Final Value," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 54, n° 3 (2020): 479-92, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10790-019-09721-5>.

¹⁴ Tenen, "An Account," p. 484. Tenen defends an account for a "reasonable *as normative*" reason to do something, *i.e.* to attribute an extrinsic final value to heirlooms and memorabilia. He therefore addresses the question of whether there is a reason for someone to do something, *e.g.* to value heirlooms and memorabilia or natural entities for their own sake, rather than the question of identifying the reason of someone's action - which would then represent a reasonable *as motivating* account of doing something.

¹⁵ Levi Tenen, "No Intrinsic Value? No Problem: Why Nature Can Still Be Valuable for Its Own Sake," *Environmental Ethics* 42, n° 2 (2020): 119-33, <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics2020111312>.

¹⁶ Guy Fletcher, "Sentimental Value," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 43, n° 1 (2009): 55-65, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10790-009-9152-1>; Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: a pluralistic view* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

an alternative, Deweyan pragmatist account of extrinsic final value and to compare it with Tenen's account from the perspective of environmental ethics and the Anthropocene. This will first require a metaethical analysis of Tenen's account, in which the double distinction in goodness made by Christine Korsgaard and the associated definitions of intrinsic, extrinsic, final, and instrumental value that it provides will be pivotal.¹⁷ Using Dewey's pragmatist theory of value formation, I will then outline my alternative account of extrinsic final value. Finally, I will compare its normative relevance with that of Tenen's from the perspective of the Anthropocene.

1. The Dualist, Instrumental-Excluding Extrinsic Account of Tenen

Tenen's account is based upon Fletcher's conception of the extrinsic final nature of sentimental value, which he further justifies using Swanton's notion of the passive aspects of love. Tenen intends to show how admiring or loving someone can provide a reason to value a *related* object (hence the extrinsic feature of the value attributed to it), like an heirloom, for its own sake rather than for the sake of something else. Valuing something for its own sake involves "both [...] affective and practical dimensions," but "neither distinguishes this kind of valuing from what is involved with valuing entities for the sake of other things."¹⁸ The affective and practical aspects of final valuing being shared by instrumental valuing, they cannot be used to specifically account for extrinsic final valuing. Tenen then argues that there are additional cognitive and conative components of one's love or admiration for someone or something. He uses Swanton's thesis of the active and passive features of love or admiration to claim that valuing something for its own sake involves a cognitive focus on the valued object with "no desire for it to make something be the case."¹⁹ In instrumental valuing, the cognitive focus is performed on something else than the valued object, or, if cognitively focusing on the instrumentally valued thing, there is a concomitant desire for it to make something be the case. Therefore, it is the passive dimension of someone's love or admiration, by contrast with the active one implied in instrumental valuing, that renders final the extrinsic value attributed to an object in relation with the beloved or admired individual. The extrinsic nature of this

¹⁷ Christine M. Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," *The Philosophical Review* 92, n° 2 (1983): 169, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2184924>.

¹⁸ Tenen, "An Account," p. 483.

¹⁹ Tenen, "An Account," p. 483.

value will not be instrumental if the focus on the extrinsically valued object is cognitive without being conative. Consistently, such an account of extrinsic final value has recently been further defended by Tenen in the setting of his methodology aimed at distinguishing final and non-final valuing, and according to which “[n]on-final valuing always involves a desire that the object contribute to something else, whereas final valuing does not.”²⁰

The examination of Tenen’s claim that his extrinsic final account of value provides an alternative to the issues associated with intrinsic valuing first requires its metaethical analysis. Korsgaard’s double distinction seems especially relevant in this respect. Indeed, Tenen appropriates Fletcher’s conception of sentimental value and further refines it into his own account of extrinsic final value, and Fletcher in turn acknowledges Korsgaard’s conceptual framework as “vital to the aim of opening up the space for sentimental value.”²¹ In addition, Korsgaard’s thoughts on the various distinctions in value are also useful to decipher the second-order difficulties faced by the concept of intrinsic value as developed by environmental ethics.

According to the environmental pragmatist Bryan G. Norton, environmental ethics, through the voice of John Baird Callicott as one of their most important contributors, have sought to “propose and defend a set of first principles that is [...] complete in the sense that [it] can generate a single correct answer for every moral quandary”, i.e. “to offer a unified and monistic account of our moral obligations.”²² Such a position obviously stands in sharp contrast with the abovementioned pluralist position of Dewey regarding values. The issue with considering that a universal principle is required as a premise for justifying a given policy is that “agreement on [such] a policy [...] will emerge only if the general principle is accepted by all parties.” If not, then philosophers “must retreat to theoretical arguments and attempt to establish more definitively the [...] monistic principle/premise before returning to applications.”²³ As a consequence of a persistent lack of agreement regarding the nature of intrinsic value and the moral obligations associated with it, “[t]he intramural debates of environmental philosophers [...] seem to have no real impact on the

²⁰ Levi Tenen, “How Final and Non-Final Valuing Differ,” *The Journal of Ethics* 26, n° 4 (2022): 683-704, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-022-09410-9>.

²¹ Fletcher, “Sentimental value,” p. 59. Tenen estimates that Korsgaard’s account has limited usefulness to justify the attribution of final value to something on account of its extrinsic features, which is distinct from using it to justify the possibility of extrinsic final value, which is what I intend to.

²² Norton, “Integration,” p. 105.

²³ Norton, “Integration,” p. 108.

deliberations of environmental scientists, activists and policy makers.”²⁴ Interestingly, John Baird Callicott himself has recently acknowledged that despite past “intense controversies with individuals such as Bryan Norton”, the advent of the Anthropocene has brought him closer to certain positions of this pragmatist philosopher.²⁵

As mentioned above, the metaethical issue of intrinsic value represents one of these long-lasting debates stigmatized by opponents of environmental ethicists. Most of the theories defended by the latter recognize the possibility of the intrinsic value of natural entities, as opposed to their instrumental value. As such, “intrinsic” value equates to “final” value, which Tenen denominates as value “for its own sake” as opposed to value “for the sake of something else.”²⁶ An alternative notion of intrinsic value was also introduced by some environmental ethicists in order “to secure the objectivity of environmental goods.”²⁷ Intrinsic value then designates the value that an entity possesses independently of the relations it might have with other entities, including an evaluating consciousness. Holmes Rolston IIIrd’s theory of intrinsic value is a representative example of such an account.²⁸ Intrinsic value as defended by environmental ethics therefore embraces a plurality of acceptations depending upon each contributor’s theory with the shared objective of establishing a firm and consensual metaethical ground allowing further normative developments. Despite its polysemy, the same term is then being classically opposed to the univocal notion of instrumental value. Hence the distortion and ambiguity partly responsible for the inconclusive debates and lack of practical efficacy that are often reproached to environmental ethics.

This is where Korsgaard’s metaethical elucidation effort is mostly welcome.²⁹ Korsgaard differentiates the intrinsic value possessed by something (X having value)

²⁴ Andrew Light et Eric Katz, “Environmental Pragmatism and Environmental Ethics as Contested Terrain,” in *Environmental Pragmatism*, eds. Andrew Light and Eric Katz (London: Routledge, 1996), 1.

²⁵ John Baird Callicott, “Anthropocene and Ethics of the Earth - Interview with J. Baird Callicott.” Interview by Rémi Beau and Benoit Monange, September 12, 2017, <http://www.fondationecolo.org/blog/Entretien-Callicott>.

²⁶ Tenen, “An Account,” p. 479, 486.

²⁷ Karen Green, “Two Distinctions in Environmental Goodness,” *Environmental Values* 5, n° 1 (1996): 31-46.

²⁸ Holmes Rolston, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

²⁹ Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions.”

from the final value that one may attribute to it (someone valuing X). From these two possibilities follows a double distinction. The first distinguishes the *final* value attributed to something for its own sake from the *instrumental* value attributed to something for the sake of something else. For example, biodiversity may be valued instrumentally for the sake of human welfare, which is then attributed a final value. The second distinction opposes the *intrinsic* value a thing may possess in itself, i.e. non-rationally, to the *extrinsic* value which derives from the relations a thing may have with other things. For example, being loved or being rare are instances of extrinsic properties. Intrinsic and instrumental values should therefore not be opposed since they do not pertain to the same distinction. Their direct comparison, as performed by environmental ethics, requires the assumption that there actually is one distinction rather than two. Under such an hypothesis, those things with final value are the same as those having intrinsic value, and those things valued as means for the sake of something else are the same as those with extrinsic value. Consequently, considering that intrinsic and final values are equivalent involves performing one out of two possible reductions: either all things with intrinsic value should be considered as ends, or all things valued for their own sakes are thereby intrinsically good.

The former possibility corresponds to the reduction of final value to intrinsic value. This is the reduction that Tenen is considering when he refers to “some writers [who] think that an object is valuable for its own sake only if it has value intrinsically.”³⁰ Such an operation ends up in an objective conception of value to which Tenen objects considering the normative and metaethical difficulties of intrinsic value.³¹ In addition, one can conclude from a look at the other side of the equation that a consequence of equating extrinsic and instrumental value is that all things which value is dependent upon relations and circumstances are means or instruments. By contrast, maintaining a double distinction allows one to consider that instrumental value does not exhaust the possibilities of extrinsic valuing and to use combinations that would not be possible in the setting of the single distinction. By defending the possibility of extrinsic final value, Tenen implicitly takes the perspective of the double distinction.³² Indeed, extrinsic final value would otherwise (namely from the perspective of the single distinction) be either both final and

³⁰ Tenen, “No Intrinsic Value,” p. 119.

³¹ Tenen, “No Intrinsic Value,” p. 120-121.

³² In accordance with the explicit acknowledgement of the usefulness of Korsgaard’s double distinction by Fletcher mentioned above.

instrumental or both extrinsic and intrinsic, which seems patently contradictory.³³ Following Tenen's account, the value attributed to a natural entity (*e.g.* the habitat of gorillas) is extrinsic insofar as it flows from the love or admiration of an individual for a related entity (the gorillas). It is final rather than instrumental due to the lack of a conative dimension associated with the cognitive focus of the individual attributing extrinsic value to a natural entity (the habitat of the gorillas). Tenen's account of extrinsic final valuing retains the classical subject-object dualism. It requires an individual's mental state in which the lack of conation avoids the instrumental aspect of extrinsically valuing something. I therefore propose that it may be summarized as an instrumental-excluding extrinsic account of final value.

2. The Anti-Dualist and Pragmatist Instrumental-Including Extrinsic Account of Dewey

In which sense is Dewey's account of the nature of values an extrinsic final account as well, and how does this account compare with that of Tenen? First, Dewey excludes the possibility of intrinsic value on metaethical grounds while Tenen rather deplores its normative consequences. Deweyan values emerge from primary experience as results of inquiry rather than being rationally, non-empirically determined and such results ultimately integrate back into what Dewey sometimes calls a "world of use and enjoyment". According to the postulate of immediate empiricism, primary, non-cognitive experience reports some feature of reality as it is since "[t]hings - anything, everything, in the ordinary or nontechnical use of the term 'thing' - are what they are experienced as."³⁴ An experience is "the manifestation of interactions of organism and environment."³⁵ The term "interaction" is however "dangerous as it is easily taken to imply two or more prior existences."³⁶ Its use presupposes a subject-object dualism that is absent from primary experience. It should therefore be replaced by that of "transaction": "What has been completely divided in philosophical discourse into man *and* the world, inner *and* outer, self *and* not-self, subject *and* object, individual *and*

³³ Both the single and the double distinctions are sketched from a dualist perspective, which Dewey's theory of valuation refuses (see below).

³⁴ MW 3:158.

³⁵ LW 14:16.

³⁶ John Dewey, *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-2007*, ed. Larry Hickman, vol.3, 1942.07.02, 15234 (Charlottesville, VA: IntelLex Corp., 1999).

social, private *and* public, etc., are in actuality parties in life-transactions.”³⁷ The Deweyan concept of primary experience “recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality.”³⁸ Dewey’s anti-dualism obviously stands in marked opposition with the distinction between subject and object that underlies Tenen’s account. Considering that all values emerge from transactions constitutive of primary experience, and “if the inherent is identified with the nonrelational, there are, according to this view, no inherent values at all”, with “[t]he same considerations apply[ing] to the term ‘intrinsic’.”³⁹ The Moorean concept of intrinsic value considered by Korsgaard’s double distinction is therefore excluded by Dewey as representing “an analysis of the abstract concept of ‘intrinsicness’ [which has been] substituted for analysis of empirical occurrences [by an] extreme nonnaturalistic school.”⁴⁰ Immediate values are extrinsic since they are relational. They present with emotional and behavioral aspects which are evocative of the affective and practical features of Tenen’s both final and instrumental values. Unlike Tenen though, and over the course of the whole valuation process, Dewey does not seek an additional criterion that would justify a distinction between final and instrumental values.

Immediate (*i.e.* inherent or intrinsic) appreciations arising from primary experience are subjective attitudes that correspond to affective and motor behavior in accordance with Dewey’s conviction that what occurs never is neutral, but always felt as good, pleasant, useful, or on the contrary, bad, unpleasant, useless, etc. More precisely, “[v]alues are values, things immediately having certain intrinsic qualities. Of them as values there is accordingly nothing to be said; they are what they are.”⁴¹ Values emerge as the results of a direct appreciation/depreciation of the immediate qualities of a situation, an event, or an object. These immediate qualitative sensations are conceived as facts, which depend on the sum of habits that guided the individual’s behavior prior to the disturbance from which inquiry and valuation originated.

Second, how does then Dewey accommodate the remaining three value possibilities, *i.e.* extrinsic, final, and instrumental? “The immediately had material of non-cognitively experienced situations” may “become problematic” and it may then

³⁷ LW 16:248.

³⁸ LW 1:18.

³⁹ LW 13:216-217

⁴⁰ LW 13:217.

⁴¹ LW 1:298.

call for inquiry.⁴² In other words, primary experience turns into inquiry when a so far “unified” situation, indicating a state of dynamic equilibrium, becomes “indeterminate”, *i.e.* when conditions of existence threaten the stability of life.⁴³ Inquiry should then identify values justifying actions aimed at reaching ends-in-view and, eventually, a novel unified situation of dynamic equilibrium. Regarding ends-in-view,

[j]ust as the problem which evokes inquiry is related to an empirical situation in which the problem presents itself, so desire and the projection of ends as consequences to be reached are relative to a concrete situation and to its need for transformation.⁴⁴

An end-in-view is the consequence to be achieved from a concrete situation that has prompted questioning and a need for change. It requires the emergence of values that will appropriately guide conduct towards the reunification of the indeterminate situation. The requirement for inquiry is initially biological insofar as maintaining homeostasis in changing conditions is necessary for living organisms in continuous, mandatory metabolic transactions with their environments. According to Dewey's naturalism, the processes involved in the resolution of human moral problems are modeled by homeostatic life-sustaining processes: inquiry leads to human valuation and a continuum exists between life-sustaining biological functions and cognitive processes of moral judgment.

Primary experience provides the subject matter of secondary experience, *i.e.* inquiry, which results are then taken “as a path pointing and leading back to something in experience.”⁴⁵ Over the course of the whole valuation process, Dewey accordingly distinguishes the immediate valuing characterizing primary experience from the evaluation performed through inquiry, with immediate valuing constituting the ground for inquiry and evaluation. Evaluation aims at selecting which immediate values will be appraised to best guide conduct towards an end-in-view. Dewey uses the term “intrinsic” or “inherent” to describe values, in a sense however distinct from the Moorean understanding mentioned above:

⁴² LW 14:32-33.

⁴³ LW 12:108.

⁴⁴ LW 13:239-240.

⁴⁵ LW 1:17.

A quality, including that of value, is inherent if it actually belongs to something, and the question of whether or not it belongs is one of fact and not a question that can be decided by dialectical manipulation of the concept of inherency.⁴⁶

A value belongs to or is inherent in a thing in the Deweyan sense when that thing is desired by an individual and becomes an end-in-view. The “dialectical manipulation” denounced by Dewey is that which leads to defining the notion of inherent or intrinsic as being outside any relation with the rest of things. Indeed, this latter conception is not compatible with the theory associating the value of an object considered as an end-in-view and the corresponding desire or interest for that object, since this theory designates the value of the object as relational by definition – it requires the relation between X valuing Y as an end-in-view.

With regards to the widely acknowledged distinction between means and ends,

[t]here is nothing in the nature of prizing or desiring to prevent their being directed to things which are means, and there is nothing in the nature of means to militate against their being desired and prized. In empirical fact, the measure of the value a person attaches to a given end is not what he says about its preciousness but the care he devotes to obtaining and using the means without which it cannot be attained.⁴⁷

Values cannot be dichotomized into either final or instrumental versions since (1) “the object finally valued as an end to be reached is determined in its concrete makeup by appraisal of existing conditions as means” and (2) ends-in-view are in turn instrumental means mobilized by inquiry in order to reunify an indeterminate situation.⁴⁸ Again, the “trouble” with the traditional distinction between instrumental and final valuing “is that a dialectic of concepts has taken the place of examination of actual empirical facts.”⁴⁹ In addition to immediate valuing, evaluation is also characterized by an extrinsic, relational dimension since the deliberation associated with the process of evaluation intends to anticipate the practical consequences of

⁴⁶ LW 13:216.

⁴⁷ LW 13:216.

⁴⁸ LW 13:213.

⁴⁹ LW 13:216.

maintaining or not the immediate valuation. Evaluating therefore convokes and depends upon relations that the thing which valuing is being performed will have with other things - hence the extrinsic aspect of Deweyan values which emerge from the secondary experience of pragmatist inquiry and which simultaneously display final and instrumental features when considered from the dualist perspective refuted by Dewey. Overall, while Korsgaard's double distinction proved useful to clarify the account of Tenen, which relies on instrumental-final and subject-object dualisms that Dewey both refuses, Deweyan objections to intrinsic value and to the instrumental-final distinction markedly weaken the explanatory usefulness of the double distinction for the pragmatist theory of valuation.

When compared to that of Tenen, Deweyan valuation is extrinsic and final as well, but things valued according to the pragmatist account are being so with the desire for them to be the case for something else, *i.e.* the end-in-view identified by inquiry: Dewey's account of extrinsic final value retains the conative aspect that Tenen eliminates. While Tenen's account of extrinsic final valuing may be further described as an instrumental-excluding extrinsic account of final value, Dewey's theory of valuation may then be interpreted as an instrumental-including extrinsic account of final valuation. An additional point of note is that Tenen's valuation remains a strictly individual process while pragmatist inquiry is conducted by individuals as well as by social groups, *i.e.* Deweyan publics which formation is prompted by the necessity to find a solution to a common problem with "indirect, extensive, enduring, and serious" social consequences.⁵⁰ It remains now to evaluate how both accounts compare from the environmental perspective of the Anthropocene.

3. The Respective Relevance of Both Accounts of Extrinsic Final Value for Environmental Philosophy

Tenen's account of extrinsic final valuing was initially sketched for entities such as heirlooms. It then seemed to involve that the entity valued accordingly ought to be protected. Indeed, Tenen "would act to protect the clock from damage."⁵¹ In exporting his account from heirloom to natural entities, Tenen argues that someone's love or admiration for a natural entity (*e.g.* gorillas) makes the loving or admiring individual

⁵⁰ LW 2:314.

⁵¹ Tenen, "An Account," p. 487. The clock is the heirloom to which extrinsic final value is attributed.

cognitively focused and conatively passive in front of an object related to the beloved entity (such as the gorilla's habitat). This attitude corresponds to extrinsic final valuing. However, extrinsic final valuing of threatened natural entities does not seem to entail their protection or preservation since it provides "a reason to focus on their habitat without always a desire to do things to ensure that it contributes to their survival."⁵² The various accounts of natural entities' value proposed so far by environmental ethicists are aimed at defending either the need for a new ethic or the relevance of the current one. Their common objective is to propose a normative position with an updated account of the relations between human beings and their environment in the setting of what was then still perceived as an ecological crisis. Since Tenen exposes reasons to attribute extrinsic final value to natural entities, I would like to further address the normative question of the relevance of Tenen's account for environmental philosophy. I suggest that the answer should consider the following two points: first, Tenen's reasons for attributing an extrinsic final value to natural entities are warranting rather than requiring; and second, Tenen's account requires that some entities, including human beings, have intrinsic value.

Warranting versus requiring

Along his detailed description of his account of extrinsic final value and its relevance for natural entities, Tenen uses the distinction between warranting and requiring reasons for attitudes previously proposed by Abramson & Leite. Accordingly, "requiring reasons for adopting a particular attitude [...] are reasons which require that one adopt the attitude unless defeating conditions are met" while "warranting reasons [...] justify adopting [an] attitude [which is] warranted, but not defeasibly required."⁵³ From an environmental perspective, an account that demonstrates the requiring rather than warranting nature of reasons to attribute final value to natural entities would likely have higher relevance for influencing policies since "no special justifying explanation is needed" when adopting a warranted reason for an attitude.⁵⁴ Tenen acknowledges that "reasons for valuing nature for its own sake can be quite weighty, even if they are not, strictly speaking, 'requiring' reasons."⁵⁵

⁵² Tenen, "No Intrinsic Value," p. 127.

⁵³ Kate Abramson and Adam Leite, "Love, Value, and Reasons," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Love*, eds. Christopher Grau and Aaron Smuts (Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199395729.013.7>.

⁵⁴ Abramson & Leite, "Love," p. 4.

⁵⁵ Tenen, "No intrinsic value," p. 130.

He is brought to this conclusion likely because being required rather than warranted to attribute an extrinsic final value to a natural entity would in turn involve being required rather than warranted to love or admire the related natural entity, and more precisely being required rather than warranted to adopt an attitude of passive love or admiration for this latter entity, a situation which seems poorly plausible as explicitly acknowledged by Abramson & Leite.⁵⁶

On the other hand, the reasons motivating the instrumental-including extrinsic final valuing à la Dewey are requiring. Indeed, a fundamental desire of all living entities is to stay alive, and “[n]o creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame, and to which, in order to live, it must adjust itself, by accommodation and defense but also by conquest.”⁵⁷ Inquiry is continuously performed by living entities because “living may be regarded as a continual rhythm of disequilibrations and recoveries of equilibrium.”⁵⁸ Potentially lethal perturbations are reasons for inquiry so that practical and vital solutions are identified to come back to equilibrium: the pragmatist process of inquiry as performed by living organisms including humans appears originally motivated by required reasons since “defeating conditions” would otherwise be met. Remember now that the processes involved in the resolution of human moral problems are of similar nature than those leading to the identification of solutions required for sustaining life in a changing environment: the process of Deweyan value emergence is therefore triggered by the originally required rather than warranted nature of inquiry. That inquiry appears required rather than warranted further displays contemporary relevance with respect to the potentially defeating conditions that humankind might meet unless actions aimed at coping with anthropogenic conditions are undertaken.

Intrinsic value

The objective of Tenen is to provide an account of value for those “entities that some philosophers have thought lack intrinsic value but which they think are not merely valuable for the sake of other things.”⁵⁹ There are consequences to extrinsic final valuing:

⁵⁶ Abramson & Leite, “Love,” p. 4.

⁵⁷ LW 10:19.

⁵⁸ LW 12:34.

⁵⁹ Tenen, “An Account,” p. 491.

Nature's extrinsic final value is derived from its relation to other things, and often from its relation to other things of value. So, it is a derivative, and not a foundational, value. For that reason, the idea that nature has extrinsic final value leaves open many possibilities about what does have foundational value. It leaves open, for instance, the possibility that only persons or sentient beings are of foundational value, but it also leaves open the possibility that ecosystems and the like do have foundational value.⁶⁰

Importantly, Tenen's account implies that some things should have "foundational" value. Tenen calls the value from which extrinsic final values derives a "foundational" or a "parent" value which likely corresponds to intrinsic value.⁶¹ Indeed, from the Aristotelian foundationalist perspective seemingly adopted here by Tenen, a thing may have extrinsic final value only if there is at least one thing that has intrinsic value and that may represent an ultimate justification of all derivative extrinsic value claims. Human beings are the first entities being cited by Tenen as potential owners of foundational value. The second possibility - intrinsic value possessed by sentient beings - is that defended by Tom Regan's biocentric deontologism centered around the intrinsic value possessed by subjects-of-a-life, which potential as an environmental ethics has been the subject of much controversy.⁶² Finally, the third possibility - foundational value possessed by ecosystems and the like - seems to lead to the situation in which natural entities would possess both a foundational and some associated derivative values, which might seem ambiguous if not contradictory unless considering that an entity might possess two distinct foundational values, one for direct, explicit foundational intrinsic valuing and the other for justifying a simultaneous derivative, extrinsic valuing. Tenen's account does nonetheless acknowledge that natural entities may have foundational value. This position strikingly resembles that of weak anthropocentrism previously defended by Eugene Hargrove. Hargrove argued that "anthropocentric intrinsic value assignments [are] judgments made by humans that such and such living and nonliving entities are noninstrumentally (intrinsically) valuable", with "[t]he word intrinsic [being]

⁶⁰ Tenen, "No Intrinsic Value," p. 121.

⁶¹ Tenen, "No Intrinsic Value," p. 130.

⁶² J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair," *Environmental Ethics* 2, n° 4 (1980): 311-38, <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics19802424>.

supposed to mean ‘for its own sake’, *i.e.* final according to Tenen’s definition.⁶³ Finally, since “it is common to think that more foundational values trump, override, outweigh, or constrain in some other way less foundational values”, extrinsic final valuing à la Tenen might not provide normative reasons for the protection or preservation of natural entities in the presence of competing human interests.⁶⁴

On the other hand, the intuition of the potential relevance of pragmatism for thinking the Anthropocene is first suggested by the proximity between Dewey's description of the transactions at work between organisms and their environment and that made by significant contemporary contributors to Anthropocene thought. Dewey's perspective, according to which " [n]o creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame" is thus analogous to that of Lenton and Dutreuil, who argues that " if living beings produce their environment, then their material boundaries no longer stop at their membranes and epidermis."⁶⁵ Dewey's definition of an environment as "the sum total of conditions that enter in an active way into the direction of the functions of any living being" thus joins that recently provided by Lenton, Dutreuil and Latour in their reception of the Gaia concept formulated by Lovelock & Margulis: "Gaia," or alternatively, the "critical zone", is “the biosphere and all of those parts of the Earth with which it actively interacts [...] - where the ‘biosphere’ meant ‘the total ensemble of living organisms’ and ‘the Earth’ refers to the entire planet as an object in the solar system.”⁶⁶ The respective extensions of the Deweyan environment and that of the critical zone understood as the site of anthropogenic perturbations are similar.

Next, Dewey's notion of value derives from the conceptions he had, at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of the universe and experience. Deeply influenced by the Copernican and Darwinian revolutions, these conceptions strikingly correspond to the evidence that drives some human beings, in the early twenty-first century, to formulate the concept of the Anthropocene. Against the

⁶³ Eugene C. Hargrove, “Weak Anthropocentric Intrinsic Value,” *The Monist* 75, n° 2 (1992): 202, <https://doi.org/10.5840/monist19927529>.

⁶⁴ Tenen, “No Intrinsic Value,” p. 121.

⁶⁵ MW 10:19; Timothy Lenton and Sébastien Dutreuil, “Distinguishing Gaia from the Earth System(s),” in *Critical Zones: The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth*, eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe, Germany Cambridge, MA: ZKM Center for Art and Media The MIT Press, 2020), 176-79.

⁶⁶ MW 6:439; Timothy Lenton, Sébastien Dutreuil, and Bruno Latour, “Life on Earth Is Hard to Spot,” *The Anthropocene Review* 7, n° 3 (2020): 248-249, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019620918939>.

defense of an intrinsic and immutable moral value, reminiscent of the pre-Copernican ordered and eternal cosmos, and which should supposedly be discovered by modern philosophy and its mode of knowledge distinct from that of the natural sciences, Dewey opposes a process of value formation anchored in the experience characterizing living organisms, of which scientific experience is itself a particular form. The centrality of experience, understood in all its forms, leads Dewey to call for a reconstruction that would mark the end of dualisms characteristic of the classical tradition and retained by modern philosophy, and, for what interests us more specifically, that opposing human beings and nature. The Deweyan experience implies that a living organism, more specifically human, and an environment define each other and cannot be conceived separately. It is described as the "interaction of an organism with its environment, [which] constitutes a circuit where the organism receives or undergoes an action from its environment and acts in turn on its environment, an action whose consequences are in turn potentially suffered by the organism."⁶⁷ Experience is consequently a source of change, which Dewey recognizes as a generic trait of existence.⁶⁸

Such considerations, formulated independently of any environmental concern, then strongly resonate with the inflection of the Earth system trajectories as a now synchronous and global consequence of the contemporary actions of certain human groups, which in turn have deleterious and significant consequences on our conditions of existence. From a Deweyan perspective, the Anthropocene could thus be described as an "indeterminate" or "troubled" situation concerning the environment of human beings, understood indiscriminately in Dewey's sense or in the sense of Lenton, Dutreuil and Latour mentioned above, since the habits acquired by certain groups have introduced a disequilibrium in the global functional integration of human beings and their environment, generating the problem of the degradation of their conditions of existence.

In contrast to environmental ethics, whose theories seek an intrinsic or final value possessed by natural entities which discovery is uncoupled from its potential practical consequences, pragmatism appears suitable for thinking through the concrete issues of the Anthropocene. Indeed, by anchoring value formation in the process of inquiry that should lead to the reunification of the troubled situation underlying it, Deweyan valuation is indissolubly linked to its practical consequences

⁶⁷ Stéphane Madelrieux, *La philosophie de John Dewey : repères*, Repères philosophiques (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2016), 67.

⁶⁸ MW 8:6.

since it must allow for the “[r]estoration of integration [which] can be effected, in one case as in the other, only by operations which actually modify existing conditions, not by merely ‘mental’ processes.”⁶⁹ By pointing to the inseparability of (human) organisms and their environments as well as the formation of values and their practical consequences, the pragmatist critique of intrinsic value is in agreement with the description of the mechanisms of the Anthropocene provided by natural sciences while satisfying the requirement for action that the current period imposes.

Finally, “growth” is the Deweyan value that might provide pragmatism with even further environmental relevance. With respect to the nature of Deweyan values that was detailed previously, growth seems to possess a somewhat derogatory status: “We set up this and that end to be reached, but the end is growth itself.”⁷⁰ More precisely:

The end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation. Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living. [...] Growth itself is the only moral “end”.⁷¹

Deweyan growth is the ever-ongoing improvement of the valuation process and of the choice of corresponding actions aimed at reaching ends-in-view. Growth is the improvement in “the quality of becoming.”⁷² It is to be appreciated “on the way we act toward ends, whatever ends we happen to have.”⁷³ Growth is therefore the improvement of moral skills. It is favored by multiplying the number of experiences in which an organism is involved. This in turn improves the quality of habits and that of inquiry when past habits prove insufficient. The value of growth is not final in the sense that it is not a consciously determined end-in-view that is external to the actions taken to achieve it, in which case it would become self-inhibiting by diverting the organism's attention from the relationships it must undertake to solve the specific problems it faces.⁷⁴ Growth is obviously dependent on the diversity of individuals'

⁶⁹ LW 12:110.

⁷⁰ LW 7:306.

⁷¹ MW 12:181.

⁷² LW 7:306.

⁷³ Stephen Levine, “The Identity of Self and Act: Pluralism, Growth, and Our Social Interest,” in *John Dewey's Ethical Theory: The 1932 Ethics*, eds. Roberto Frega and Stephen Levine (New York: Routledge, 2022), 151.

⁷⁴ Levine, “The Identity,” 151.

social environment and the opportunities it provides, but also on their physical environment.⁷⁵ Whitney Howell has shown how both the social and material aspects of the urban environment can influence the Deweyan growth of each of its inhabitants.⁷⁶ Whether the concept of growth could provide Dewey's thought with additional relevance in the era of the Anthropocene would deserve a thorough analysis that goes beyond the scope of this article. It is hardly in doubt, however, that Aldo Leopold's observation made in the middle of the 20th century, and according to which "your true modern [...] has no vital relation to [the land, which is] to him [...] the space between cities on which crops grow" still holds true today.⁷⁷ The entry into the Anthropocene is characterized and caused by the reduction of human interactions with the natural environment to exclusively instrumental, productive, or extractive relationships, from which contingency is as far as possible eliminated. The natural environment is no longer associated with the necessity of inquiry and the emergence of new values: it rather is the site of the mechanized repetition of habits indifferent to the resolution of problems that they generate. The scarcity of inquiry opportunities deprives human beings of the specific learning element inherent in each of them, and thus inhibits their growth, i.e., their ability to find solutions to problems originating from transactions with the environment in the general sense. The reversal of this negative dynamic then involves, in practice and as in the case for the social environment, a defense of the diversity of potential experiences within the natural environment.

4. Conclusion

While homonymous, Tenen's account and my pragmatist Deweyan account of extrinsic final value are far from being synonymous. Tenen postulates the existence of intrinsic value and requires dualistic subject-object and final-instrumental perspectives whereas the Deweyan theory of valuation refutes both intrinsic value and dualisms. In addition, Dewey's naturalism provides requiring reasons to value things while warranting reasons are likely to be expected from Tenen's account. Finally, the

⁷⁵ MW 9:93.

⁷⁶ Whitney Howell, "The Environmental Conditions of Agency: John Dewey and Jane Jacobs on Diversity and the Modern Urban Landscape," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 32, n° 2 (2018): 263-84, <https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.32.2.0263>.

⁷⁷ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 223-224.

consideration of Deweyan growth as a meta-value guiding the process of extrinsic final valuation provides a suitable theoretical background to collectively address the practical issues raised by the contemporary ecological transition and the advent of the Anthropocene.

Dewey's notion of transaction and the primacy that it confers to relationships rather than to their terms, as well as the interdependence between the living and the environment that it emphasizes, makes the notion of intrinsic value obsolete with respect to the conceptualization of the new geological era characterized by synchronic, global, and reciprocal changes between human beings and their environment. In addition, the conception of a world in constant change, as a philosophical consequence drawn by Dewey from the Copernican and Darwinian revolutions, and the uncertainty regarding the results of these changes despite the preferred directions identified by inquiry are suggestive of the main challenge of the Anthropocene. Indeed, the subject-matter of the new geological epoch consists in identifying ends-in-view that will allow the reunification of an environmental situation made uncertain by a few decades of human activities. The contemporary relevance of Deweyan thought may then be additionally found in the sort of derogatory status accorded by Dewey to growth, a "meta-value" to be considered for the improvement of the human "quality of becoming," intimately linked to the variety of human transactions with the environment.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ I owe much to Marlène Jouan for her comments on previous drafts.

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