

Original Contributions - Originalbeiträge

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Frondizi and Mandelbaum on the Phenomenology and Ontology of Value

... it seems plausible to look for the objectivity of value in the objectivity of organization.
KURT KOFFKA, *"The ontological status of value: A dialogue"* (1935).

In the past few years, there has been a considerable amount of research taking seriously the work of the school of Brentano and mainstreaming especially Husserl into an “analytic” phenomenologist (Chrudzimski & Huemer, 2004; Huemer, 2005). More specifically, there has been a renaissance of phenomenological work on the thought of Maurice Mandelbaum (Horgan & Timmons, 2005; Kriegel, 2007; Timmons & Horgan, 2010). One might think it a proper time to reunite Mandelbaum’s thought to the phenomenological tradition. As I shall argue, this has already been done in a sense, by recognizing Mandelbaum’s lost mate in Risieri Frondizi.

Risieri Frondizi (1910–1983) and Maurice Mandelbaum (1908–1987) had very similar theories of value, yet they never discussed one another. Both drew inspiration from the theories of Wolfgang Köhler, but in different ways. Frondizi focused on the ontology of value, calling a value a Gestalt quality. Mandelbaum instead focused on “fittingness,” and the phenomenological sense of obligation uniting an action and a context. I propose to combine the two to form a more rigorous theory, a combined phenomenological and ontological theory. After presenting the outlines of their respective theories, I will show how they fit together well, uniting the two strands of value theory from their common inspiration, Köhler.

My plan for this article first is to give a broad overall comparison of the systems of Frondizi and Mandelbaum, noting their respective strengths and primary interests, then passing on to a discussion of the objectivity of value and the notion of phenomenological requiredness and fittingness. Finally, I discuss the ontology of value. I end with a brief discussion of aesthetics. In the end, I find that the two thinkers are highly complementary and can be used to flesh out a larger “Gestalt” theory of values that goes toward showing how emergent, phenomenological “feels” supervene on fundamentals (Bozzi, 1969; Koffka, 1935; Köhler, 1938, 1971; Wertheimer, 1961).

1. Frondizi and Mandelbaum

Risieri Frondizi and Maurice Mandelbaum – almost perfect contemporaries – are strangely aloof from one another and their twin works – *What is Value?* and *The Phenomenology of Moral Experience* do not acknowledge each other (Frondizi, 1958/1971; Mandelbaum, 1955). Both protégés of the Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Köhler (Frondizi at Harvard, where Köhler spent the 1934–1935 academic year and Mandelbaum at Swarthmore where he was junior faculty with the older psychologist), they never discuss one another in print. The closest thing to any recognition is the negative review of Mandelbaum's *The Phenomenology of Moral Experience* by Frondizi's friend, Hartman (2002). Frondizi and Hartman published in journals like *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, with a “continental” bent. Mandelbaum, although fully conversant with this tradition, was more mainstream and published instead in the *Journal of Philosophy*.

Both Frondizi and Hartman were interested in the general theory of value, axiology, a largely ontological project that also touched importantly on the question of objectivity and subjectivity. Mandelbaum instead was interested in experience and drew on the phenomenological tradition. What makes the prospect of uniting them exciting is that they drew from common authors who had written both on the structure and experience of value. Both spend a lot of time considering the works of Nicolai Hartmann and Max Scheler and reject them for similar reasons. Interestingly, while Frondizi goes back to von Ehrenfels, Mandelbaum goes back to von Hildebrand (1916). Thus, Mandelbaum is extremely knowledgeable of the Husserl circle whereas Frondizi registers the larger Austrian tradition.¹ Therefore, they are in the vicinity of one another but, once again, reflecting an ontological and phenomenological bias.

2. The Objectivity of Value

Both Frondizi and Mandelbaum make different kinds of compelling arguments for the objectivity of values and both insist that this is different from deducing any (ranked) standards of value. Köhler (1938) originally stated that actions in the context of behavioral states of affairs have a certain “requiredness,” and he sought to extend this idea beyond the psychological or phenomenological sphere. Mandelbaum, however, followed the Anglo-Saxon tradition connected to C. D. Broad, David Ross and A. C. Ewing and limited the intuition of requiredness to the less ambitious “fittingness.” As noted by Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons (2005), “While Köhler is concerned with the metaphysical task of finding a place for value in a world of fact, Mandelbaum is primarily concerned to make progress

¹ It is interesting that when John Passmore reviewed Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason*, he noted Mandelbaum's neglect of Brentano and his school (Passmore, 1973).

in the search for an adequate normative moral theory. Both thinkers held that phenomenological description is the basis for accomplishing these tasks.”

What is important to note is that phenomenology is agnostic to ontological realism or rather its “realism” regards moral *objectivity* rather than the ultimate nature of value (Broad, 1930; Ewing, 1947; Ross, 1939). As Horgan and Timmons continue, “the phenomenology of moral experience is non-committal on this particular, refined metaphysical issue [or moral realism].” Thus, Mandelbaum – in seeking to place Köhler’s within a more tractable system – specifically set himself on a non-ontological path. Although what he wrote has ontological import, and gives evidence toward an adequate ontological theory, it was not specifically intended to go in this direction. Conversely, Frondizi firmly argues (against Scheler) that value must be based on experience but never writes of the feeling of compulsion attached to moral acts. Indeed, he tends to speak of value in general, not what Mandelbaum called “direct judgments of moral rightness and wrongness,” and he never discusses potential actions in conflict, which is the very definition of a direct moral judgment.

So what is the nature of objectivity as Mandelbaum analyzes it? For him, it is a state of perceptual belief, of conviction. This quality of conviction arises from the perceptual apprehension of the situation and, like general presentations of the world, cannot guarantee validity (Lewin, 1951; Zukier, 1982). But one is able to test the objectivity of a moral judgment based on what constitutes the more essential nature of a given situation.

The basis of the moral objectivity attaching to some activity is its “felt demand.” In order to properly grant its objectivity, one has to be clear about what “objectivity” means. For the Gestaltists and for Mandelbaum, it is a phenomenological quality of presentations. The definition is decidedly not physicalistic or materialistic but rather based on the qualities of reality and irreality that are found directly in experience. Not consequently, Köhler’s discussion of requiredness goes alongside an epistemological discussion of objectivity, wherein he distinguished between his biological “organism” and his phenomenal “body.” Mandelbaum is here presuming that perceptual *qualia* can be regarded as objective within an “inclusive naturalism” (that the mental should be included within the natural)² and explains:

[A] demand is experienced as a force. Like other forces it can only characterized through including in its description a reference to its point of origin and to its direction. It is my contention that the demands which we experience when we make a direct moral judgment are always experienced as emanating from “outside” us, and as being directed against us. They are

² For “inclusive naturalism,” see Hatfield (2004) and, more generally, Strawson (1994).

demands which seem to be independent of us and to which we feel that we ought to respond (Mandelbaum, 1955, p. 54).

The fittingness of moral demands is objective because we can interrogate those intuitions and find that they reduce to nonmoral qualities. As Timmons and Horgan (2010) note, it is Mandelbaum's scrupulous intent to remain with phenomenology and not overstep his conclusions about "what particular metaphysical conclusion one might draw from the facts of introspective phenomenology."³

3. Value as a Gestalt Quality

Although Christian von Ehrenfels introduced the "Gestalt" category into philosophy and psychology, Berlin-oriented Gestalt thinkers such as Köhler moved away from him because they were not interested in *qualities*, accidents and kinds of non-extensive parts, but rather special kinds of *wholes* (Smith, 1988). For them, what needed to be explained was not the additional element added to a set of sensations, the empiricist version of Gestalt quality, but rather the mutual coordination of all the elements together. While we will have occasion to go back to the Berlin idea of a Gestalt, we must take a detour through von Ehrenfels.

Although as Frondizi points out, the subjectivist approach of Ehrenfels is alien to his project (in that he does not believe, contra Ehrenfels, that valuing an object is also *desiring* it), nevertheless, Ehrenfels's *ontological* approach is predictably close to Köhler et al. in being relational (von Ehrenfels, 1897, 1898). According to Smith (1994):

In regard to values, Ehrenfels points out that they cannot be properties, dispositions or capacities of objects, for then their existence would be bound up with the existence of the objects involved. Such a conception would imply, for example, that the value of the victory of the Normans in 1066, for example for present-day Frenchmen, ceased to exist in 1066. Value is, rather, according to Ehrenfels, a certain sort of intentional relation between a subject and an object, a relation which can however be re-conceived (re-parsed ontologically) for certain purposes also as a property of its object (p. 288).

Of course, for von Ehrenfels, an intentional relation merely refers to an intentional object, re-represented to consciousness, and a presentation. Smith, elsewhere, has reflected on the notion of organic unity to link von Ehrenfels to Gestalt theory but instead let us follow Frondizi's suggestion of using Ehrenfels's own innovation, the *Gestaltqualität* (von Ehrenfels, 1988).

³ As Horgan and Timmons note, "the argument only purports to provide pro tanto or defeasible evidence in favor of moral realism, rather than conclusive evidence in favor of such realism."

Recall that a Gestalt quality refers to a phenomenal quality that is maintained when its fundaments change, for example, a melody. To reflect on this ontologically, the Gestalt quality is the *emergent relations* arising between the parts. This could be the case, psychologically, with a melody, or as Köhler reasoned, physically, with a charge that occurs within an electric field. Finally, it could be likened to the sense of obligation or fittingness of an action that arises with some perceived acts within the environment. Frondizi (1971) clearly invokes the criterion of emergence in writing that values “cannot be *separated* from the empirical qualities and yet neither can they be *reduced* to them” (p. 160).

Köhler uses the term “Gestalt quality” to refer to this technical, ontological category, and also to refer to expressive qualities in general. He calls these, appropriately, Ehrenfels qualities. They are the so-called expressive or tertiary qualities. Thus, a musical crescendo has the “Ehrenfels quality” of “swelling” (Köhler, 1938, p. 237). Now, in a manner that should not surprise us (as this book was a result of lectures that Frondizi heard and maybe discussed with Köhler), when in *The Place of Value in a World of Facts* Köhler introduces “requiredness” it is clear that it is in his words an “Ehrenfels quality” and, hence, a *Gestaltqualität*. Indeed, value and “tertiary” are run together as “tertiary value qualities” and Köhler concludes that “value-situations fall under the category of Gestalt” (Köhler, 1938, pp. 79, 86).

Frondizi (1972) clearly distinguished between Gestalt and Gestalt quality in one of his latest papers:

Value is not a Gestalt but a Gestalt quality (*Gestaltqualität*). A Gestalt is an entity like a living being, a building, a poem or a person, but beautiful and good are value. Values are always adjectival. In a strict sense, it may even be improper to say that value “is” a Gestalt quality; we should say that the Gestalt quality is what makes a thing beautiful or good, i.e. valuable (p. 176).

4. Gestalt Quality as a Dispositional Property

Previously value was likened to a “tertiary” or “Ehrenfels quality.” Here, I want to address the comparison of value with a “secondary” quality like color. Before this can be meaningful it has to be clear what we mean by primary and secondary qualities. Contrary to the standard view that sees a secondary quality as more “subjective” than a primary quality, I shall interpret primary qualities as ideas of transcendent objects and secondary qualities as configurations of primary qualities that have the power to cause a certain experience (of that object).

A corollary of the revised understanding of primary and secondary qualities is the epistemological notion of realism. The critical realism that Köhler, Mandelbaum and Frondizi rely upon is dualist, and separates percepts from transcendent

objects. In the most sophisticated version of Mandelbaum (1964), it is a “radical critical realism,” according to which we may not identify any of the qualities of objects with external experience. Interestingly, a new kind of perceptual objectivism ensues once this ontological break is made. Mandelbaum (1964) has written that,

once one abandons the assumption of a correlation between what is directly perceivable and what can be represented on our peripheral sense organs, there is no reason to believe that qualities such as stability or unity are as basic in perception as are colors or shapes (p. 231).

This neatly separates all perceptual qualia from transcendent objects, secondary, tertiary or otherwise.

The term “tertiary” qualities was coined by Alexander (1920, p. 236). It was adopted by Gestaltists just as an expedient and, as noted earlier, is no different from Gestalt qualities and Ehrenfels qualities. At this point, we can see a powerful reason to regard such qualities as merely kinds of other traditional “secondary” qualities. If that is so, the call to treat moral qualities as secondary qualities is renewed. It was Mackie (1977) and McDowell (1985) who first began to propose to talk of value as a secondary quality. That discourse evolved into the treatment of values as objective insofar as they are response-dependent. Like colors, for example, they are not objective, viewer-independent, but like colors again can be ascribed objectivity insofar as average viewers in standard illumination perceive them.

Mandelbaum already considered Roderick Firth’s ideal observer theory back in 1955 when he considered the resolution of moral controversies. While Firth emphasized how an ideal moral judge is “disinterested, dispassionate, and normal,” Mandelbaum (1955) instead emphasized the degree to which moral responses are “to what the situation itself is held to demand” (pp. 251, 249). Thus Mandelbaum rejected a *rationalist* as opposed to an *ontological* approach to moral realism (Horgan & Timmons, 2008). This subtle distinction is consistent with Christopher Norris’s critique of response dependence as not really addressing the realism-subjectivism question and, worse, as reducing morality to mere epistemic warrant (Norris, 2002).

In contrast, Norris argued for a fuller sense of realism and this is just what is promised by the classic understanding of the meaning of a secondary quality and more recently by dispositional theories of color (and other secondary qualities). In this way of looking at a secondary quality, color is the power to look a distinctive way to appropriate perceivers. This is in Hatfield’s (2007) version, a *psychobiological* theory. That is, color is not an averaged response but the systematic interaction of the reflectance of surfaces, the human perceiving apparatus and environmental conditions.

Looked at in this way, McDowell's notion of moral objectivity as something "there to be experienced" is too weak. Moral qualities are also psychobiological, involving phenomenally represented states of affairs of actors in (at least for direct moral judgments) choice situations. Horgan and Timmons (2008) suggest this possibility when they note that it is possible to be an ontological realist when rational realism fails (pp. 270–271). This is the good old-fashioned realism in which dispositional properties may or may not be exercised in different situations. The Gestalt emphasis on relationality seeks to understand when and how properties will be relationally determining depending on the context. It is not a form of absolutism that sees "goodness" as a simple quality (e.g. G. E. Moore). As Frondizi (1972) says, this does not make value simple, but extremely complex.

5. Moral Absolutism

It is for the reasons that value is a Gestalt quality, which is itself a kind of dispositional property that value cannot be a simple property of an object, contrary to Scheler or Hartmann. Both Frondizi and Mandelbaum take Scheler seriously – particularly Frondizi – but ultimately reject his theory. If the Gestalt quality category was introduced to move beyond point-to-point atomism, it would be used in ethics to challenge absolutism. In other words, just as a figure or melody can stay the same with different fundamentals, or change with the *same* fundamentals, so an act can too. Here, it is useful to compare the literal expansion of Wertheimer's (1923) rules of perceptual organization with Heider's (1946) rules of interpersonal attribution. Heider, of course the last doctoral student of Alexius Meinong and no stranger to Gestalt qualities, presumed that one could talk about social units and their unit formation in the same way one can talk about forms.

Indeed, in an Ehrenfelsian way Heider shows that acts, as physical, distal events, are equivocal. There is no direct property of goodness that may be intuited in them. Much more important is the way in which the constituents of an act are embedded in a phenomenal context. We see a man drunk on the subway. He is staggering and seems as if he may fall down and hurt himself. This is a situation that directly confronts us; what should we do? The psychologist Weiner (1986) follows Heider to demonstrate how, in most cases, an unwillingness to help an apparently homeless man drunk on the subway is not so much self-love but attribution of causal controllability for his present condition and therefore anger and unwillingness to help. The chain of causal attributions goes like this:

Anger

Situation>>>>>>Causal
Controllability>>>>>Help

Ascription>>>>>>Causal

Sympathy

We have the situation itself. We then effect a causal ascription: could this person control this situation himself? Is he there because he has gotten drunk, and may not have prepared himself for the consequences of his act? Or does he get drunk often? Depending on the answer to the question, an emotion will arise. Either we feel anger or sympathy. In the latter case, we help.

Although in this section, we have relied mostly on von Ehrenfels, Köhler and Frondizi, it is important that Mandelbaum (1955) argued against Moore that “fittingness” is relationally analyzable into natural relations that they bear to the context in which they appear (p. 60). Here, we realize that even though Mandelbaum’s project is phenomenological, he practices the old method of phenomenal variation, which has important ontological consequences. In line with “inclusive naturalism,” once again ontology should never be interpreted in a physicalist or substantialist way, so that “physical” acts are actually phenomenal representations of distal physical acts and the situation or state of affairs against which the act occurs is also phenomenal. Here, ontology is just as much a part of phenomenology as anything.

Mandelbaum’s primary contribution to make to Frondizi’s basic ontological framework is the inherent relationality of valuing. Mandelbaum picks up not only from Köhler, but also from Karl Duncker – Köhler’s student and their common colleague at Swarthmore, as well as Solomon Asch – all of whom had demonstrated the Gestalt nature of value changes. In a list that is not exhaustive, Mandelbaum (1955) outlines two large classes of relational differences in moral judgment:

- “apprehension of the causal *consequences* of a particular overt act” (pp. 196–200).
 - “two people hold contrary beliefs as to what results will ensue if the act is performed”
 - “two persons ... differ with respect to the range of the consequences which they apprehend the act as having”
- “differently perceived *meanings* of overt behavior to observers” (pp. 200–204; Asch, 1952; Duncker, 1939).
 - “two observers are judging what are really different actions because they attribute different *intentions* to the agent”
 - “judging of different actions because they differ in their apprehension of the *situation* in which the action is embedded”

Interestingly, Frondizi in “Value as a Gestalt quality” (1972) briefly glosses similar principles. In the case of a disagreement,

- “There is a difference between the two about what constitutes ‘figure’ and what ‘ground’ in the situation. What is figure for one is ground for the other” (p. 183).

As with the case of the drunken person on the subway, there is a complex series of attributed intentions and states of affairs that have to be sorted out to test the validity of a judgment. Again, this is relationism but not relativism.

Nevertheless, both Frondizi and Mandelbaum doubt that there is any rank order of values that is forthcoming, and anyway as both have argued moral principles or norms reduce down to moral judgments (Frondizi, 1969; Mandelbaum, 1956; cf. Frankena, 1967; Frondizi, 1968). Mandelbaum argues that there is no “discoverable standard against which conduct is to be judged.” What he means by this is that even when there is moral conduct, we cannot adduce a standard that will settle a dispute. Nevertheless, there are a number of principles that he investigated which lead to the resolution of moral controversies, even if they are not perfect. First, Mandelbaum (1955) invokes the “principle of the primacy of the facts.” A moral judgment, according to this principle:

- “must arise as a direct response to the apprehension of the non-moral properties which the object which is praised or blamed actually possesses” (p. 245).

Again, Frondizi (1972) states that in cases of moral disagreement, there may be disagreement on “natural qualities”:

- “One person ignores one or more natural or descriptive qualities that are relevant”
- “One attaches more importance than the other to one or more descriptive or natural qualities”
- “One does not pay attention to the whole but sticks to one or more single descriptive qualities” (p. 183)

Next, Mandelbaum (1955) explores what he calls the “principle of universality,” that a judgment:

- “make an assertion which is not restricted by a reference to the conditions under which the judgment is made” (p. 263).

Finally, according to the “principle of ultimacy,” a moral judgment that is believed to be valid must be:

- “incurrable, and any incurrable moral judgment must be acknowledged to be binding upon thought and action” (p. 277).

Taken together, such checks ensure that the theory is cognitive and reduces to real properties of the world, an indirect ontological argument for realism.

Above, Frondizi had just similarly made reference to natural or descriptive qualities, which has similarities to Mandelbaum’s invocation of the “primacy of the facts.” From there, however, he proceeds in a more abstract manner than Mandelbaum, referring to the relative “height” of two values in conflict – a solution that seems

to echo von Ehrenfels (Fronidizi, 1971, p. 11, 1972).⁴ In the end, Mandelbaum (1955) admits that there are limits to “justifiable moral argument,” leaving a space of indeterminacy in resolving moral controversies (p. 307).

6. Combining Ontological Realism and Epistemological Objectivism

One way in which the power of the Fronidizi/Mandelbaum theory can be recognized is in terms of the current debate about *unreflective freedom*. According to Hubert Dreyfus (2005), we can combine a phenomenological responsiveness to the world with an ethical imperative by recognizing that our boundedness to the world’s solicitations becomes a kind of unreflective freedom (cf. McDowell, 2007; Rietveld, 2010).

Dreyfus, although grateful for Mandelbaum’s phenomenological treatment of ethics in *The Phenomenology of Moral Experience*, already took him to task for his intellectualism, precisely a factor in the current debate about unreflective freedom (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1990). But Dreyfus and Kelly have precisely been taken to task for being forced to accept a component into their theories of an agent stepping back and stopping or disengaging the flow of engaged coping.

I believe that here they miss a major chance at a breakthrough by recognizing that what is at issue is not freedom but an important new sense of determinism. Common to their larger commitments to anti-representationalism and inspiration from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, they do not focus on cases of choice, only where an action has already been initiated. Mandelbaum, however, shows that it is focused attention in choice that results in a radical way to see the path to the good through the determining aspects of situations. Indeed, Mandelbaum defines “willed action” not in terms of an executive ego but in terms of the phenomenological sense of responsibility for the consequences of an action (and also our ability to give reasons for it).⁵ Dan Zahavi has demonstrated the ubiquity of such a conception in the phenomenological tradition, of which Mandelbaum belongs. For example, Sartre (2003) writes that “consciousness is self-consciousness” (cited in Zahavi, 2010).

It has recently been argued that much discussion of freedom is conceptualized with Humean ideas of linear causality (Groff, 2013, ch. 4). When law is conceived

⁴ On Gestalt “level” (*Höhe*), see von Ehrenfels (1916).

⁵ This is why the term “judgment” may be used to refer to such appraisals. As Mandelbaum (1955) explained: “the term ‘judgment’ as here used must be construed in a loose manner, for in speaking of a direct moral judgment, I do not mean to imply that inference is involved ... One immediately ‘sees’ – or so one believes – the rightness or wrongness of that which is contemplated. It might therefore seem preferable to speak of a ‘direct moral awareness’ or a ‘direct moral insight.’ However, ‘awareness’ and ‘insight’ tend to shift attention from the act of the agent to the specific content of his moral conviction, and both suggest that this content must necessarily be valid. In default of a better term I therefore prefer to use the work ‘judgment’ in an admittedly loose sense” (p. 46).

as linear succession, then the question of whether humans are subject to natural law must negotiate a particular notion of law. However, if laws are not regular successions of linear events, freedom must also change. The emphasis placed by both Frondizi and Mandelbaum on the moral situation is precisely a kind of contemporaneous causation that can substitute for linear causation. Both McDowell and Dreyfus/Kelly take for granted an idea of freedom, which remains largely unexamined in their accounts. For Mandelbaum, however, the question is not what makes human action decidedly free, but rather how is it that choices can be determined and yet we accept *responsibility* for these selfsame determined choices. This is one way of avoiding the debate that has ensued between both camps as to who can truly respond to unreflective action.

It is here that the demand character of moral experience arises, the affordances of the environment that solicit us. However, to repeat, many times they are in conflict and so we attend directly to the situation, its objective structure, to respond adequately. In this sense – and this is the radical element – the environment *determines* our actions. Mandelbaum developed this aspect of his theory in a couple places, first in a remarkable paper, “Determinism and moral responsibility,” and later in “The determinants of choice,” most of which was incorporated into *Purpose and Necessity in Social Theory* (Mandelbaum, 1960, 1986, 1987). Rejecting a Humean idea of causality in which antecedent causes lead to later results, Mandelbaum embraces a kind of simultaneous causation according to which *all* of the factors present in a moral situation determine it. Instead of past association blindly guiding the present, we may be conditioned to attend to present circumstances. Although he finds some kinship with the account developed by William James, his inspiration is once again Gestalt psychology and its ideas on the situational determination of behavior.

Frondizi has not been forgotten. His emphasis on situations extends to a new sense of determinism and freedom. Although he accepts Mandelbaum’s point that choice is determined, in his general introduction to philosophy of 1977 Frondizi sees a paradoxical kind of “freedom” that arises in such situational determination (Frondizi, 1977). He follows some Latin-American precedents, such as Gustavo Korn, in developing an idea of “creative freedom” (*libertad creadora*). However, this is exactly the same idea that psychologists in the Gestalt tradition developed (Metzger, 1962).

7. A Note on Aesthetics

A final virtue of the Frondizi-Mandelbaum theory of value is that it offers rich solutions for aesthetics. Mandelbaum uses “aesthetic” and “quasi-aesthetic” examples to explain fittingness and Frondizi practically makes no difference between moral and aesthetic examples, and frequently mentions “good” and “beautiful” in

the same breath. For Mandelbaum, all normative experiences are not restricted to ethics and they may be found in perceptual experience. Following Gestalt ideas, he actually uses features of aesthetic perception as a “paradigm” or the fittingness of an action to a situation. When we contemplate an action, that is urging our action, we experience a potential fittingness that is not fundamentally different, he argues, from one seen in the perception of figures or, say, a sense of a missing part of a painting.⁶ The same sense of requiredness or fittingness is seen.

If Mandelbaum’s analysis is again focused on moral and aesthetic experience and he does not discuss the nature of value, Frondizi’s discussion of aesthetics is more ontological. The Gestalt quality was introduced with the example of music and it is such a perfect paradigm of such a quality because it emerges above the individual notes; Frondizi’s examples follow this form. For example, he discusses an Ikebana flower arrangement. The beauty of the arrangement will not be apparent if the flowers are scattered on a table; they must be artfully arranged. Here, Frondizi is interested in an ontological criterion, super-summativity: if the quality emerges above and beyond the parts, and is more than a mere sum, it is a Gestalt quality. For the abstractness of the argument, Frondizi cannot have the worry that Mandelbaum did later in his career, when in passing he noted that he regretted not emphasizing that fittingness can obtain between an action and one’s self-image. In other words, he felt that the use of aesthetic and quasi-aesthetic examples might trivialize the weightiness of genuine moral judgment (Mandelbaum, 1987, p. 141).

8. Conclusion

Combining the ethical and axiological theories of Risieri Frondizi and Maurice Mandelbaum can yield a stronger account of moral and aesthetic goodness, complete in both phenomenological and ontological details. Frondizi’s immersion in German language traditions of axiology is a boon for articulating value as a Gestalt quality, which then joins nicely to Mandelbaum’s account of moral fittingness. Although Mandelbaum was strongly influenced by phenomenology and Gestalt theory, his account in *The Phenomenology of Moral Experience* ends up fitting more comfortably into Anglo-Saxon approaches to ethics. Frondizi in a sense returns Mandelbaum back to the tradition of Brentano. Frondizi’s simple, yet robust, system works well with Mandelbaum’s restrained version. The two should be discussed together in the future for elaborating a more encompassing way to discuss moral demandingness in both an experiential and ontological way.

⁶ Don Marietta agrees that fittingness is not limited to ethics: “When I reflect concretely about moral fittingness, what do I find? The only basic difference I can see is that moral fittingness is found in situations that have moral significance” (Marietta, 2004).

Summary

In this article the ethical systems of Risieri Frondizi and Maurice Mandelbaum, both decisively influenced by Wolfgang Köhler, are investigated for the first time. Each writer took different things from Köhler, Frondizi the idea of value as a Gestalt quality and Mandelbaum the idea of value as a felt demand. Their positions are highly complementary and Frondizi's axiological approach enlightens the ontology of value whereas Mandelbaum's phenomenological approach clarifies the nature of "requiredness" (Köhler) or "fittingness."

Keywords: Gestalt quality, fittingness, Christian von Ehrenfels.

Frondizi und Mandelbaum zur Phänomenologie und Ontologie von Wert

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Artikel werden die ethischen Systeme von Risieri Frondizi und Maurice Mandelbaum, die beide maßgeblich von Wolfgang Köhler beeinflusst wurden, erstmals untersucht. Jeder der beiden Autoren übernahm anderes von Köhler, Frondizi die Auffassung von Wert als einer Gestaltqualität und Mandelbaum die Auffassung von Wert als einer gefühlten Forderung. Ihre Positionen ergänzen sich in hohem Maße, und Frondizis axiologischer Ansatz erhellt die Ontologie von Wert, während Mandelbaums phänomenologischer Ansatz die Natur von "Gefordertheit" (Köhler) oder "Angemessenheit" verdeutlicht.

Schlüsselwörter: Gestaltqualität, Angemessenheit, Christian von Ehrenfels.

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