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Values and Emotions: Introduction

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In one of his works, Dietrich von Hildebrand wrote that emotions are among the most under-appreciated topics in the history of Western philosophy.¹ Von Hildebrand stresses that it is reason and rationality, rather than emotions, that have been regarded as the most essential dimension of human beings and their personal lives. This is why von Hildebrand calls for a fundamental rethinking of how we view ourselves. Furthermore, it is difficult to disagree with his assertion that the emotional side of human beings is the dimension in which the meaning and the joy of life are to be found, alongside the ‘flow,’ about which an American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi² will write later, and, finally, happiness.

¹ See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Heart. An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press in association with the Dietrich von Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2007), ch. 1: *The Role of the Heart*. See also: Stanisław T. Zarzycki SAC, *Dietricha von Hildebranda filozoficzno-teologiczne podstawy duchowości serca* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1997); Leszek Kopciuch, *Wolność a wartości. Max Scheler, Nicolai Hartmann, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Hans Reiner* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2010), 318–322.

² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow and the Psychology of the Discovery and Invention* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996).

In the context of axiological theory, the issue of emotions and their role in this sphere encompasses a range of fundamental questions. For example, what is the role of emotions in the experience of values? Can the emotional experience of values constitute axiological cognition? Can the role of feelings, which is so unquestionable in ordinary human life, be transferred to the cognition of values in axiology? Does the emotional apprehension of values necessarily entail subjectivism and relativism? Is the role of emotions the same for all values, or does it vary depending on the specific value?

An international academic conference devoted to these issues took place from 20 to 21 November 2025 (organized by the Institute of Philosophy at UMCS and the journal *Culture and Values*. The five articles in the current issue's thematic section are based on presentations given at the conference. However, these articles only represent a small sample of the issues analysed during the conference. A report on the conference proceedings has been published in the previous issue of *Culture and Values*.³ All of these essays analyse important and distinctive issues. Nevertheless, they differ with regard to their specific topic, approach, and methods.

The first article, *The "Sheer Dynamic Form" of Value: A Phenomenological-Emotionalist Axiology in Light of Dance*, is a work of an independent researcher Maryam Vahedi. The topic of the essay is highly specific and original. The author reflects on the question of values as they manifest themselves in dance. "Using Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's phenomenology of dance, the analysis demonstrates how dance abstracts feeling from everyday content to reveal its 'sheer dynamic form,' or 'import.' The argument contends that values function analogously as invariant qualitative forms intuited pre-reflectively. They are 'sheer dynamic forms' intuited emotionally and kinetically, distinct from the specific actions in which they appear. This trajectory reframes value as a qualitative presence one becomes one with, suggesting that ethical agency is a process of kinetic-emotional attunement—a re-orientation that reclaims the body as the primary site of axiological discovery" (p. 9).

³ See Leszek Kopciuch, "Contemporary Challenges and Values 4/ Współczesne wyzwania i wartości 4: Values and Emotions/ Wartości i emocje," *Kultura i Wartości* 2025, no. 40: 265–268, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/kw.2025.40.265-268>.

The second article, entitled *Mixed Feelings Towards Value*, was written by Marielle Antoinette H. Zosa, a researcher from the Philippines. The article discusses the application of Mitchell's theory to mixed feelings. Zosa states: "Finally, I ultimately contend that other traditional theories of emotion such as judgmentalism/cognitivism, perceptualism, and attitudinalism fall short in explaining both the phenomenology of mixed feelings, and the temporal and modal elements of emotional objects needed to apprehend mixed feelings in the first place" (p. 31).

The next article, entitled *An Enactive Account of Anger and Forgiveness*, is by Daniel Shargel, a researcher from the United States. Shargel analyses the relationship between anger and forgiveness based on an enactive theory of emotion. He writes: "According to this view, an emotion is appropriate if it prepares the agent to successfully carry out a specific class of actions. Anger mobilises the victim's mind and body to secure concessions from the perpetrator. Forgiveness marks the moment when preparing for aggressive action against the perpetrator ceases to be an appropriate response" (p. 53, 73).

The fourth article was written by Sophia Lateef, also from the United States, and is primarily devoted to the issue of compassion in the context of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy (*Insight into Disvalue: Schopenhauerian Tragic Compassion*). In her conclusions, the author states: "Comparing Schopenhauer and the philosophers who followed him allows us to recognise the affective phenomenon that I call tragic compassion. Tragic compassion motivates us to act even when we cannot believe that suffering can be alleviated, or, more radically, if we can know with certainty that suffering can never be alleviated. This makes it not only an interesting feature of Schopenhauerian thought, but a potentially fruitful political and ethical attitude" (p. 91).

Finally, in her Polish-language article, *Władysław Witwicki's personal ethics: ambition as a contribution to human self-improvement*, Lucyna Majewska analyses the concepts of ambition and cratism as found in the writings of Władysław Witwicki. She presents them as the foundation of Witwicki's project of secular ethics and human self-improvement. Majewska portrays ambition as "a positive disposition conducive to self-improvement and to the development of responsibility" (p. 95). This is an interesting perspective which sheds light on Witwicki's lesser-known views. In a philosophical context, Witwicki is primarily known in Poland as a translator of Plato's works.

The approaches presented by the authors vary, as do the contexts and themes of their reflections. Yet it is precisely through this diversity that they constitute a significant contribution to the study of the relationship between values and emotions.

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