Introduction

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The addresses in this collection are arranged chronologically by year in which delivered. Such arrangement reflects one of the motives of the work as explained in the preface: to provide a historical record of the American Society for Value Inquiry. However, apart from some rough correspondences to contemporaneous currents and fashions in American philosophy, such a chronological arrangement does not result in anything like a conceptually or structurally organized set of readings. Because there is evident in the assemblage of addresses some stratification of issues addressed by the past presidents of the Society, and because the usefulness of the volume may be enhanced by some structured previewing of its contents, I have chosen to suggest an ordering of the readings in a non-chronological manner. The reader may take this as a guide to one possible reading of the collection.

Before turning to such a structural approach, let me comment upon another feature of this work. Each President's address is preceded by an autobiographical statement and a photo of that individual. Symbolically, this feature represents my sense that these works of value inquiry in particular carry with them in some way or another pieces of the lives, the passions, the preoccupations of their authors. If the hypothesis of the Preface is correct, the Presidential Address as a genre is a form of exhortation, an entreaty to the audience to take seriously a particular concern of the speaker/writer. Indeed, an invitation to become President of a society, where the office carries with it the duty to deliver a Presidential Address, is a license to engage in such exhortation—and in the self-revelation which such exhortation necessarily involves.

It was thus my intent to render that disclosure of self more fulsome by inviting these captive contributors to submit an autobiographical essay, tracing some of the influences, personal and situational, which shaped their choice of topic. Three of the Society's Presidents, Robert S. Hartman, William T. Blackstone, and William H. Werkmeister, are no longer with us, although Werkmeister completed his autobiographical sketch before his death. I have employed the services of others to contribute biographical statements on the behalf of the other two.

Thomas Magnell has usefully offered a division of value inquiry into three types. The first is disciplinary value inquiry. "Questions of technological value, pedagogical value, ecological value, evolutionary value and personal value all delimit what may be called fields of disciplinary value inquiry." As well, moral philosophy, and questions of aesthetic value and of economic value, are raised in value inquiry into such fields. The other two forms are inter-disciplinary value inquiry and meta-disciplinary value inquiry. The former is "an activity which has to do with questions of value that bear on two or more fields of disciplinary value inquiry." "Meta-disciplinary value inquiry may be characterized as
an activity that takes in questions that go beyond all field of disciplinary value inquiry, questions that can be raised for all fields of value inquiry whether disciplinary or inter-disciplinary.

Magnell’s scheme seems to reflect some of the structural ordering of ethics into Meta-Ethics, Ethical Theory, and Applied Ethics that was forged in the profession during the 1960s and 1970s. The structuring of ethics proceeds along a singular primary axis: theory about ethical theory, ethical theory in abstracto, and ethical theory in application to disciplines and domains of problems. That is, the axis is that of levels of generality in a discipline that runs, ultimately, at right angles to a range of questions arising in other fields of human activity, but that, considered in itself, is straightforwardly arrayed. Magnell’s structuring suggests that the full range of value inquiry expands the scope of inquiry beyond that for moral value, including valutational questions of the three levels of generality for other types of value: economic, political, aesthetic, literary, etc. Magnell’s scheme thus repeats the pattern for ethics (meta-ethics, ethical theory, applied ethics) for each of the disciplines with valutational components. To this he adds a fourth dimension, trans-disciplinary value inquiry, arising from the multi-disciplinary scope of value inquiry, from the character of meta-disciplinary value inquiry, and from questions regarding whether disciplines are to be regarded as defined and separated nominalistically or on the basis of real differences in their subject domains.

I thus divide the following alternate listing of the addresses in this collection, into meta-value inquiries, inquiries at the level of the theory of values, disciplinary value inquiries, and trans-disciplinary value inquiries. It is suggestive rather than definitive; other groupings might strike the reader as appropriate. The listing is offered as one heuristic way of ordering the readings thematically and independent of chronology.

Notes

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
Introduction xxvii

Meta-Value Inquiries

Thomas Magnell
Virgil C. Aldrich
John W. Davis
Richard B. Brandt
Abraham Edel

Theory of Value

Robert S. Hartman
Gene G. James
James B. Wilbur
Ruth M. Lucier
Eva Hauel Cadwallader
Patricia H. Werhane
Sidney Axinn
John M. Abbarno

Inter-Disciplinary Value Inquiries

William H. Werkmeister
Robert E. Carter
William T. Blackstone
Stephen W. White
Robert Ginsberg
Sander H. Lee
Tom Regan

Trans-Disciplinary Value Inquiries

Richard T. Hull
Norman E. Bowie
Lisa H. Newton
Burton M. Leiser