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Axiological Investigations

BY

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Abstract

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The subject of this thesis is *formal axiology*, i.e., the discipline that deals with structural and conceptual questions about value. The main focus is on *intrinsic* or *final* value. The thesis consists of an introduction and six free-standing essays. The purpose of the introduction is to give a general background to the discussions in the essays. The introduction is divided into five sections. Section 1 outlines the subject matter and sketches the methodological framework. Section 2 discusses the supervenience of value, and how my use of that notion squares with the broader methodological framework. Section 3 defends the concept of intrinsic or final value. Section 4 discusses issues in value typology; particularly how intrinsic value relates to final value. Section 5 summarises the essays and provides some specific backgrounds to their respective themes.

The six essays are thematically divided into four categories: The first two deal with specific issues concerning analyses of value. Essay 1 is a comparative discussion of competing approaches in this area. Essay 2 discusses, and proposes a solution to, a significant problem for the so called 'buck-passing' analysis of value. Essay 3 discusses the ontological nature of the bearers of final value, and defends the view that they are particularised properties, or *tropes*. Essay 4 defends *conditionalism* about final value, i.e., the idea that final value may vary according to context. The last two essays focus on some implications of the formal axiological discussion for normative theory: Essay 5 discusses the charge that the buck-passing analysis prematurely resolves the debate between consequentialism and deontology; essay 6 suggests that conditionalism makes possible a reconciliation between consequentialism and moral particularism.

Keywords: axiology, buck-passing, conditionalism, final value, G.E. Moore, intrinsic goodness, intrinsicism, supervenience, tropes

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To Lisa

This thesis consists of the following introduction and the essays:

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2. Olson, J. Buck-Passing and the Wrong Kind of Reasons. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 54 (2004), 295-300.
3. Olson, J. Revisiting the Tropic of Value: Reply to Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 67 (2003), 412-22.
4. Olson, J. Intrinsicism and Conditionalism about Final Value. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 7 (2004), 31-52.
5. Olson, J. Buck-Passing and the Consequentialism/Deontology Distinction. *Submitted manuscript*.
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Uppsala, March, 2005

J.O.

Preamble

*'What do you mean by "good"?'
'Oh, I don't know', she sighed
impatiently. 'Has anyone ever
managed to say what it is?'*
Ian Pears, *The Dream of Scipio*

This thesis deals with a variety of issues concerning intrinsic or final value, i.e., the value something possesses 'in itself' or 'for its own sake.'¹ Questions about good and bad are pivotal to ethical theory, understood broadly as the discipline that deals with fundamental questions about how to live and how to act. Among those, questions about what is valuable in itself or for its own sake occupy centre stage. This is my first rationale for theorising about value, and about intrinsic or final value in particular.

The notion of intrinsic or final value is also, I claim, quite familiar from ordinary thinking and everyday reasoning. Consider David Hume's famous example:

Ask a man *why he uses exercise*; he will answer *because he desires to keep his health*. If you then enquire *why he desires health*, he will readily reply *because sickness is painful*. If you push your enquiries further and desire a reason *why he hates pain*, it is impossible he can ever give any. *This is an ultimate end*, and is never referred to any other object.

Perhaps to your second question, why he desires health, he may also reply that it is necessary for the exercise of his calling. If you ask why he is anxious on that head, he will answer because he desires to get money. If you demand why? It is the instrument of pleasure, says he. And beyond this it is an absurdity to ask for a reason. It is impossible there can be a progress in infinitum; and that one thing can always be a reason why another is desired. Something must be desirable on its own account[.] (1998, Appendix I, §18)

This example comes from a philosopher and is used in the context of a philosophical argument, but the basic idea is by no means alien to ordinary thinking and everyday reasoning. Although not always explicitly spelled out, the chains of justification Hume is talking about are familiar enough. This is

¹ I try to sort out the differences between these idioms in section 4 of the introduction. See also essay 4.

not to say that such chains must always end with pleasure or pain, or prospects thereof. The point we should take into account is merely that such chains of justification must end somewhere. The object of Hume's discussion is desires rather than values, but the example nevertheless provides an initial illustration of the idea of intrinsic or final value, or, rather, what it is for a thing to possess such value. In so far as you have an idea about what it is for something to be desirable on its own account, or in itself, or for its own sake, you have an initial grasp of the notion of intrinsic or final value. My hunch (which I admit to be no more than a hunch) is that most people are, after a moment's reflection, able to come up with something they take to be desirable on its own account, or in itself, or for its own sake; be it pleasure, knowledge, friendship, personal achievements, the thriving of loved ones, or what have you.

This, in turn, is my second rationale for theorising about intrinsic and final value: The notion crops up more or less frequently in ordinary thinking and reasoning, and the very term is sometimes, albeit presumably less frequently, used in everyday speech. It is, consequently, important to try to get clearer about what is at issue.

The thesis consists of this introduction and six free-standing essays. Each essay deals with specific formal value theoretical issues. The purpose of the introduction is not merely to summarise the essays, but also to provide a general background. The introduction is divided into five sections, each of which splits up into a number of subsections. In section 1 I outline the subject of the thesis; what I call formal axiology. I sketch the methodological framework and explain how formal axiology relates to adjacent disciplines. In section 2 I discuss the supervenience of value, and how my use of that notion squares with the general methodological framework. In section 3 I take issue with a number of arguments according to which the concept of intrinsic or final value is no more than a philosophical chimera. In section 4 I try to sort out some issues in value typology. Finally, section 5 summarises the six essays and provides some more specific backgrounds to the themes of the essays.

1. Sorting Out Value: Disciplines and Distinctions

Formal axiology is the subdiscipline of moral philosophy that deals with structural and conceptual issues about value and value concepts. In order to provide as clear a framework as possible, I will explain where the discipline of axiology fits in on the broader map of the moral philosophical landscape. In particular, I will explain how axiology is related to metaethics, and how axiology may be divided into the subdisciplines of formal and substantive axiology.

Philosophy is popularly described as dealing with ‘the big questions’ and the philosophy of value is no exception. Due to the complexity and profundity of these questions, the risk of going astray in pondering and debating them is imminent and ubiquitous. Although some of the distinctions I draw in this section will be rough and although the disciplines distinguished will sometimes overlap, I believe that the discussion goes some way to decrease the risk of going astray; it is intended to help us keep in clear focus the particular issues in which we are interested, while at the same time helping us see how they relate to adjacent issues. I focus narrowly on formal axiology, and in doing so I want to bracket some difficult and widely discussed issues, the answers to which may be initially postponed in the formal axiological discussion. My suggestion will be that theorising about value does not presuppose distinctive stands on these issues.

I am aware that these preparatory remarks concerning the theoretical framework are likely to strike the reader as highly abstract. In order to make them more concrete, I had better move on to explain how they apply in the context of this thesis. I begin by introducing a basic and familiar distinction between meta-ethics and normative ethics in section 1.1. Section 1.2 explains what axiology is, and how it divides into two distinct branches. In section 1.3, I demarcate the subject of this thesis and outline the methodological framework. I do so by explaining how formal axiology relates to adjacent issues.

1.1 Meta-Ethics and Normative Ethics

Virtually every introductory textbook in moral philosophy starts out by dividing the subject into two more or less overlapping subdisciplines often labelled ‘meta-ethics’ and ‘normative ethics’. According to this standard picture, the latter is concerned with first-order questions about good and bad, right and wrong, and so on. Such first-order normative questions can take one of two forms: They may be concerned with what generally makes good things good, or right acts right, and so on. When we attempt to answer such questions we are in the business of formulating systematic normative theories. First-order normative questions may also be concerned with particular rather than general normative issues, such as whether eating meat is wrong, euthanasia permissible, or gay marriage outrageous. Different theories of what generally makes actions right or wrong provide different answers to such particular first-order normative questions.

In meta-ethics we are interested in second-order questions concerning normative first-order questions. That is, we are interested in questions *about* first-order normative claims, e.g., that maximisation of happiness or the presence of a good will generally make actions right, or that eating meat is wrong, euthanasia permissible, or gay marriage outrageous. Second-order questions about such claims may take various forms.

First, we might ponder the *semantic* status of normative judgements – i.e., judgements to the effect that something is right or wrong, good or bad, rational or irrational, or that something ought to be done, or that there is reason to do this or that. We might ask whether such judgements are capable of being true or false. We might ask whether they primarily purport to describe a normative reality or whether their primary function is to express pro- or contra-attitudes that purport to guide behaviour. This leads into the related issue of the *ontological* status of normativity: Are there normative facts or properties in the world that normative judgements describe, or is the world purely naturalistic or value-free?

If the primary function of normative claims is to describe features of the world it seems natural to say that normative judgements express beliefs. And if normative judgements are capable of truth and falsity, then it is natural to assume that normative knowledge is possible. However, if normative judgements are prescriptive rather than descriptive and express non-cognitive attitudes, e.g., desires or prescriptions, rather than cognitive attitudes, it might be more difficult to see what truth and falsity would consist in for normative judgements. This leads into the controversy about the *epistemological* status of normative judgements.

This in its turn has a bearing on the *psychological* status of normative judgements: If normative judgements are cognitive rather than non-cognitive, it might be difficult to account for the seemingly platitudinous observation that people tend to be motivated in accordance with their norma-

tive judgements. But it might be responded that this observation can be properly accounted for by appealing to the idea that the connection between normative judgements and motivation is merely contingent. This takes us into the battle between internalists and externalists about motivation.

Meta-ethicists are typically occupied with interconnected questions of these kinds, i.e., with questions concerning the semantics, ontology, epistemology, and psychology of normativity and normative judgements. Let us say that these four types of interrelated questions are the ‘core issues in meta-ethics’ that jointly constitute what we may call ‘meta-ethics in the narrow sense’. And let us say that ‘meta-ethics in the wide sense’ comprises all second-order questions about normative and evaluative judgements.

The meta-ethics/normative ethics distinction provides a helpful means of orientation in what may initially appear to be a disorderly array of disciplines and distinctions. In the next section I intend to enrich the map of disciplines by making a few more detailed distinctions. The purpose of this exercise is the same as the purpose of drawing the metaethics/normative ethics distinction; to take the first steps towards sorting out a field of intricate issues. It is, in short, the first move in the endeavour to sort out value.

1.2 Axiology: Formal and Substantive

I shall take ‘axiology’ to mean the same as ‘value theory’. Axiological theories are theories about value. Within the field of axiology we can draw a distinction parallel to the one we used to distinguish meta-ethics and normative ethics. That is, we can distinguish between first-order questions about value and second-order questions about value. The former type of questions deals, roughly, with what *is* valuable or what *makes* things valuable. The discipline encompassing this type of questions might be labelled *substantive* axiology. In substantive axiology, we are thus interested in identifying the particular values.

We may also be interested in second-order questions about value, i.e., conceptual and structural issues concerning value and evaluative concepts. The branch of axiology that deals with this cluster of questions may plausibly be labelled *formal* axiology. The clearest way of illustrating in more detail the division between formal and substantive axiology is simply to state what I take to be the core issues in formal and substantive axiology, respectively.

We begin with substantive axiology. Competing ideas about what is valuable are far from uncommon in philosophical and non-philosophical literature, nor are they hard to find in political debates and in ‘everyday thinking’. It is easy to find representatives in one or more of these areas of the views that pleasure is good and suffering bad, or that equality, liberty, knowledge, or friendship is good, or of something completely different. Controversies

about these issues concern substantive axiology. The object of such controversies might be to identify what is valuable as a means to something else that is of value, or to defend a view of something's being valuable in some more fundamental sense, i.e., intrinsically or finally valuable.

This brings us to one of the issues that are to be included within the frame of formal axiology, viz. value typology. This issue has to do with what different types of value there are, and with the conceptual distinctions between them. Some of those distinctions are intuitively familiar; I just appealed to the difference between something's being valuable as a means and something's being valuable in some more fundamental sense, e.g., intrinsically or finally valuable. Other distinctions may be less obvious but no less important. (I discuss value typology in section 4 below.)

A significant controversy in value typology, namely the issue of whether there is a distinction to be made between intrinsic value and final value, has been thought to be intimately related to two other issues at the forefront of the formal axiological debate. One of these is the issue of value bearers. This is not the substantive question about what is valuable; it is rather a question *about* that which is valuable. More specifically, about which ontological categories the bearers of value belong to. This question must also be distinguished from the one concerning the ontological status of *value*, which divides realists and anti-realists (more on this in the two following sections). Ideally, formal axiological theories about value bearers are compatible with both realist and anti-realist metaethical views (see essay 3).

The second issue in formal axiology that has turned out to be closely related to value typology concerns whether intrinsic or final value may or may not vary according to context. According to many philosophers, notably G.E. Moore, intrinsic or final value is by definition context-independent. However, some philosophers – the present author included – reject this view. This is discussed in section 5.3 and in essay 4 below.

My last example of an issue in formal axiology is the question of how intrinsic or final value is to be analysed. A well-known answer to this question is G.E. Moore's; intrinsic or final value is unanalysable. But according to other traditions in value theory, value concepts – including the concept of intrinsic or final value – are analysable in terms of some other normative concepts such as 'ought', 'reason', 'rationality', etc. Various versions of this influential idea will be considered at some length in this thesis (see subsections 3.1, and 5.1, and essays 1, 2, and 5).

1.3 Demarcating the Subject

In the preceding two sections I have outlined the familiar distinction between meta-ethics and normative ethics and the less familiar distinction between formal and substantive axiology. The latter resembles the former in that it

too rests on a distinction between second-order and first-order questions. It seems natural, therefore, to categorise formal axiology as a part of meta-ethics in the wide sense of that term (see section 1.1 above), and to categorise substantive axiology as a part of normative ethics.

I have already stated that the focus of this thesis is formal axiology. The issues I want to discuss are those in terms of which I outlined the discipline of formal axiology. For the purpose of making the discussions as clear and well-focussed as possible, I want to bracket what I take to be the core issues in meta-ethics; those issues that jointly constitute meta-ethics in the narrow sense of the term. That is, my approach to the formal axiological discussion will be agnostic and unprejudiced with respect to issues concerning the semantics, ontology, epistemology, and psychology of normative judgements. My reason for adopting this approach is purely pragmatic; the core issues in meta-ethics are much discussed and highly complex. To postpone, at least initially, the final verdicts in these areas therefore strikes me as a wise methodological tactic.

But the legitimacy of bracketing these issues in the formal axiological discussion may be doubted. For instance, it might be assumed that questions about intrinsic or final value are of interest only to philosophers inclined to accept some kind of realism about value, or that accepting realism is necessary in order to be entitled to make use of the concept of intrinsic or final value. If these assumptions were correct, my methodological approach would be wrongheaded from the start.

But the assumptions, whether real or imagined, are groundless. Theorising about value does not presuppose a realist view of the semantics or the ontology of value. Even if you are an error theorist and believe that there are no value properties in the world, or if you are an expressivist or prescriptivist and believe not only that there are no value properties, but also that evaluative terms do not purport to describe anything, you need not deny that there is a concept of intrinsic or final value that is useful in normative theorising. You need not deny this even if you are a subjectivist naturalist.

Obviously, these different theories will differ in their ultimate analyses of the concept of intrinsic or final value, but a welcome consequence of adopting an unprejudiced theoretical point of departure is that we can, temporarily at least, postpone the pursuits of finding answers to these questions. This is not to sweep difficult problems under the carpet. It is an attempt to steer clear of a massive problem complex in order to enable and facilitate advancements in formal axiology.

However, even granted the legitimacy and advisability of adopting an approach that is unprejudiced and agnostic on the core issues in meta-ethics, it is an open question how far we can advance in formal axiology while maintaining this agnosticism. It is surely an unwarranted assumption that all formal axiological theories are innocuous with respect to these issues. But such questions must, I believe, be tackled as they crop up in the course of investi-

gation (see, e.g., sections 2, 3, and essay 3). Again, it strikes me as a legitimate as well as advisable tactic to postpone, as far as possible, commitments to controversial stands on the semantics, ontology, epistemology, and psychology of value and evaluative judgements, in the course of our formal axiological investigations.

It also deserves to be emphasised that the discussions in this introduction and in the essays do not presuppose a particular normative position. It is sometimes assumed that questions about value are of interest exclusively to philosophers of a consequentialist or teleological bent. But surely, deontologists, contractualists, virtue ethicists and anyone with a serious interest in moral philosophy should pay some consideration to questions about good and bad. And if so, anyone with a serious interest in moral philosophy should pay some consideration to conceptual and structural issues about value, i.e., to formal axiology.

However, a caveat must be entered here as well. Just as it is an open question how far we can advance in formal axiology while remaining agnostic on the core issues in meta-ethics, it is an open question how far we can advance in formal axiology while remaining agnostic on normative issues. But once again I find it methodologically advisable to avoid, as far as possible, controversial normative commitments, and to tackle these questions if and when they crop up in the course of our formal axiological investigations (see essay 5).

Before closing this introductory section, I should make a clarifying terminological note. I have throughout been talking disjunctively about ‘intrinsic or final value’, and occasionally about value ‘in itself’ or ‘for its own sake’. It is controversial whether these locutions can be used interchangeably, or whether they reflect interesting axiological distinctions. I discuss this matter in section 4, which deals with value typology. Meantime, I shall mainly use the term ‘intrinsic value’, rather than ‘final value’. The reason is simply that this sits better with the terminology of some of the authors I discuss.

2. The Supervenience of Value

Throughout this thesis I make frequent use of the notion of supervenience of value. It is therefore appropriate to take a more careful look at what is meant by this notion. In 2.1, I provide a sketchy outline. 2.2 gives an equally sketchy outline of how supervenience claims are differently construed on different meta-ethical theories.

In 2.3, I take issue with Simon Blackburn's claim that supervenience spells trouble for non-naturalist realists about value. If the argument goes through, my use of supervenience is in tension with my methodological approach to formal axiology, which is avowedly agnostic with respect to the core issues in meta-ethics, such as realism contra anti-realism and naturalism contra non-naturalism. It is consequently vital for my purposes to defuse the argument. But first some general remarks about the supervenience of value.

2.1 The Supervenience of Value (Sketchily) Characterised

The supervenience of the evaluative on the non-evaluative is virtually universally accepted as platitudinous. It is customarily specified in two ways. Let us call them the 'in virtue of'-formulation (S_{ivo}) and the 'similarity'-formulation (S_{sim}), respectively:²

(S_{ivo}) Necessarily, for all x , if x has a certain value, then x has this value in virtue of (a subset or the total set of) x 's non-evaluative properties

(S_{sim}) Necessarily, for all x and all y , if x and y are exactly similar with respect to non-evaluative properties, then x and y are exactly similar with respect to evaluative properties

Both (S_{ivo}) and (S_{sim}) are perfectly commonsensical. Indeed, it seems that anyone who violates them misuses or misunderstands evaluative discourse. To see this, imagine a person who denies (S_{sim}) and claims that although x and y are exactly similar with respect to non-evaluative properties, x and y

² Cf. Danielsson 2001, p. 93.

are not exactly similar with respect to evaluative properties. Such a claim is baffling, and the reason for this is, I believe, that it violates requirements of consistency and non-arbitrariness that seem to be built into the practice of valuing.³ To hold that some x possesses a certain value while a non-evaluatively identical y does not seems, from the point of view of evaluative discourse, plainly inconsistent or arbitrary.

Now imagine someone who denies (S_{ivo}). This person claims that value need not obtain in virtue of non-evaluative properties, and maintains that some x could be valuable in virtue of nothing at all; x could be, as it were, ‘just valuable, period.’ But it is indeed hard to see what it would be for something to be just valuable, period. The reason why this is so hard is that, as Nick Zangwill has recently put it, “our only access to the upper-level [evaluative] properties is *via* the lower-level [non-evaluative] properties plus knowledge of their [supervenience] connection” (2005, *forthcoming*).

To put the matter in metaphysical rather than epistemological terms; evaluative properties are dependent, i.e., supervenient, properties that must stand in asymmetric dependency relations to non-evaluative properties (this is the ‘in virtue of’-relation). There can be no bare evaluative differences for, as we have it from (S_{ivo}), it must be the case that if x possesses a certain value, x does so in virtue of (some or all of) its non-evaluative properties, and, as we have it from (S_{sim}), it must be the case that if x and y are exactly alike with respect to non-evaluative properties, x and y are exactly alike with respect to evaluative properties. The two ‘musts’ here are both instances of the conceptual ‘must’ (hence the necessities in (S_{ivo}) and (S_{sim}) are conceptual). This means that anyone who fails to recognise that there cannot be value if there is nothing upon which this value supervenes, and that x and y cannot differ in evaluative respects if they do not differ in non-evaluative respects is conceptually confused; she demonstrates, as it is popularly put, “lack of competence with evaluative vocabulary.”⁴

Incidentally, we may here take notice of a crucial difference between the supervenience of value and supervenience connections in another realm of philosophy, where theorising about the notion abounds. It is a familiar claim in the philosophy of mind that the mental supervenes on the physical. For instance, pain experiences are thought to supervene on physical goings-on. In metaphysical terms; mental properties are thought to stand in asymmetric dependency relations to physical properties in ways that resemble the asymmetric dependency relation that obtains between the evaluative and the non-evaluative.

But there are crucial dissimilarities between evaluative and mental supervenience. Most fundamentally, the idea that the supervenience of the mental on the physical is conceptual is much less plausible than the corresponding

³ Cf. Zangwill 1995, p. 243.

⁴ Blackburn 1985, p. 136.

idea in the realm of value. Firstly, in contrast to the evaluative case where it seems hard to imagine something as being just valuable, period, i.e., as being valuable in virtue of nothing at all, it does not seem overwhelmingly difficult to imagine entities that possess mental properties but lack physical properties. That is, it does not seem very hard to imagine something as being ‘just mental, period’. Such entities would be disembodied minds that possess mental properties, albeit not in virtue of any physical properties. Spirits, ghosts, or God might be examples of such entities.

Secondly, it seems that one can be familiar with, e.g., pain experiences without being familiar with the fact that such experiences supervene on some physical goings-on. Echoing Zangwill, we might say that in contrast to the evaluative case, our access to the upper-level mental properties is direct, and not mediated via the lower-level physical properties. Differently put: A person who does not recognise the supervenience of the mental on the physical is not conceptually confused; she might be scientifically mistaken, but she does not demonstrate lack of competence with mental vocabulary.

The upshot is that the supervenience of value is *a priori* and conceptual; that the evaluative supervenes on the non-evaluative is something we know in so far as we know what it is for something to be valuable; that is, in so far as we are competent users of evaluative vocabulary. In contrast, the supervenience of the mental on the physical appears to be *a posteriori* and non-conceptual; that, e.g., experiences of pain supervene on physical goings-on is a scientific discovery, it is not something we know simply in so far as we know what it is for someone to experience pain, or in so far as we are competent with mental vocabulary.⁵

The claim that the supervenience of the evaluative on the non-evaluative – as spelled out in (S_{ivo}) and (S_{sim}) above – is conceptual must be carefully distinguished from the utterly different claim that a particular evaluative property supervenes on a particular non-evaluative property. Treating this latter claim as conceptual rather than substantive amounts to the view that there is some non-evaluative property (properties) that conceptually necessitates some evaluative property (properties). Proponents of various forms of naturalism about value might endorse such conceptually necessary connections, but a problem for any such view is that it seems perfectly possible to be substantively mistaken about what is in fact valuable without being conceptually confused, that is, without being incompetent with evaluative vocabulary.

The crucial point is that the view that the supervenience of the evaluative on the non-evaluative, as formulated in (S_{ivo}) and (S_{sim}), is conceptually true, is perfectly compatible with the view that it is never conceptually true that a particular evaluative property supervenes on a particular non-evaluative

⁵ Zangwill 2005.

property (this will prove vital in the discussion of Blackburn's challenge below).

My aim so far has been to outline the supervenience of value. It is time now to raise the question how this outline squares with the agnosticism with respect to the core issues in meta-ethics that pervades my approach to formal axiology in this thesis.

2.2 Supervenience and Meta-Ethical Commitments

I have been talking in a rather carefree manner about evaluative properties and about evaluative properties supervening on non-evaluative properties. Such talk about evaluative *properties* may sound too metaphysically loaded to sensitive ears. Indeed, it is often taken to be a distinguishing mark of anti-realist theories about value that there are no such things as evaluative properties. It might be questioned, then, if the discussion up to this point hasn't been biased against such theories.

The straightforward answer is no. Anti-realists about value can take my carefree talk about evaluative properties with a big grain of salt. The error theorist, for instance, can accept everything I have said as it stands, with the reservation that there are as a matter of metaphysical fact no evaluative properties (and hence, as a matter of metaphysical fact, no supervenience relations, since, according to error theory, it is impossible for one of the relata to be instantiated).

Anti-realists about value of an expressivist or prescriptivist bent will repudiate supervenience as a dependency relation holding between properties, since they agree with the error-theorist that there are no evaluative properties. Expressivists and prescriptivists are more likely to think of supervenience as a consistency constraint on evaluative judgements to which speakers are committed by virtue of the meaning of evaluative terms.⁶ Such philosophers are likely to be inclined to think of supervenience as a dependency relation obtaining between predicates, rather than between properties. But none of this forces anti-realists of any stripe to disagree with what I said above about the conceptual status of the supervenience of value, and how it differs from supervenience in other realms of philosophy, e.g., the philosophy of mind.

However, there is a long-standing argument, due to Simon Blackburn, that attempts to establish that the supervenience of value spells trouble for non-naturalist realists. If the argument goes through, it shows that talk of supervenience is not as meta-ethically innocent as I have made it seem, and

⁶ See e.g. Blackburn 1984; Hare 1989. Klagge 1988 offers a good comparative discussion of realist and anti-realist construals of supervenience. See also the discussion of Blackburn's argument below.

this would obviously threaten the viability of the methodological framework of this thesis. Let us see if it does.

2.3 Blackburn's Puzzle Deconstructed

Blackburn's argument has provoked much discussion. It is fair to say that although a majority of the commentators agree that the argument is ultimately unsuccessful, there is less agreement on how it is best presented and countered.⁷ Blackburn himself has offered different formulations of the argument over the years. I shall focus on the form in which it was set out in 1984. To anticipate, my diagnosis will be that the key to dissolving the puzzle – rather than solving it – lies in carefully keeping in mind two crucial distinctions; that between maximal non-evaluative properties and less than maximal non-evaluative properties, and that between two kinds of modalities.

Here is my reconstruction of the argument. Blackburn's basic assumption is (**S_{sim}**): It is conceptually necessary for all x and all y that if x and y are exactly similar with respect to non-evaluative properties, then x and y are exactly similar with respect to evaluative properties. To adopt Blackburn's terminology, let A be an evaluative supervenient property that x may or may not have. Let us also say that there is a complete non-evaluative description of x , containing "everything that *could* be relevant to determining [x 's] A -state."⁸ I shall say that the property of x corresponding to this description is x 's 'maximal non-evaluative property'. Call this property B^*x . Let us, following Blackburn, express A 's supervening on B^* as B^*/A .

Blackburn sums this up as follows: "There is no possible world in which one thing is B^* and A , but other things are B^* and not A ."⁹ Now, Blackburn's attack is leveled against non-naturalist realists, and it is a central tenet of non-naturalism that there is no B^* that determines with conceptual necessity whether something is A . For as Blackburn and the non-naturalists agree, people may moralise badly without conceptual confusion.¹⁰ But to say that there is no B^* that determines with conceptual necessity whether something is A is to say that for any B^* , there are worlds in which something is B^* and A (B^*/A worlds in Blackburn's terminology), and worlds in which something is B^* and not A ($B^*/\neg A$ worlds). How, then, can it be conceptually impossible that there be worlds in which something is B^* and A , and some other thing B^* and not A ($B^*/A \& B^*/\neg A$ worlds)? Blackburn puzzles over the

⁷ See, e.g., the rather different presentations of the argument in Miller 2003, pp 53-57. ; Sobel 2001; Strandberg 2004, pp. 242-49; Zangwill 1995.

⁸ Blackburn 1984, p. 183 [italics in original].

⁹ Blackburn 1984, p. 183.

¹⁰ Blackburn 1984, p. 184.

explanation of this “ban on mixed worlds”.¹¹ I shall come back shortly to why Blackburn believes that this alleged puzzle is especially difficult for non-naturalist realists. Meanwhile, I shall attempt to show why there is no puzzle in the first place.

Since B^* is a maximal non-evaluative property of x , there can be no y , distinct from x , which also possesses B^* ; no two things in the same possible world can be exactly similar with respect to maximal non-evaluative properties. That is, there can be no world in which something is B^* and A , and some other thing B^* and not A ,¹² and since it is logically impossible for a thing to be both A and not A , it follows that there can be no mixed $B^*/A \& B^*/\neg A$ world. This is perfectly consistent with the conceptual possibility of B^*/A worlds and $B^*/\neg A$ worlds. For provided that we are not conceptual naturalists, we do not believe that there is a B^* that determines with conceptual necessity whether something is A .

Assume now that B^- is a less than maximal non-evaluative property of x , and that Ax supervenes on B^-x , so that we have a B^-/A world. According to non-naturalist realists, B^-/A , if true, holds with what is sometimes called *metaphysical*, but not conceptual, necessity.¹³ That is, given that B^-/A is a metaphysically necessary truth, there are conceptually possible worlds of the B^-/A kind, the $B^-/\neg A$ kind, and the mixed $B^-/A \& B^-/\neg A$ kind.

It is notable at this juncture that, as several commentators have highlighted, Blackburn frames his original puzzle in terms of *intra*world or *weak* supervenience, rather than in terms of *inter*world or *strong* supervenience. To recall, Blackburn believes that it is a conceptual truth that there is no possible world in which a thing is B^* and A and other things are B^* and not A . But it has been objected that “[w]hat is conceptually necessary is not only

¹¹ Blackburn 1984, p. 184.

¹² Somebody might raise the following objection here: Purely numerical and indexical properties must lack evaluative significance; such properties cannot appear in the supervenience base of value. Assume that B^+x is a property that differs from B^*x only in that B^+x contains no purely numerical and indexical properties of x , whereas B^*x does. It might then be argued that in some conceptually possible world, two distinct individuals, x and y , both share B^+ . But friends of supervenience might want to claim that there is no conceptually possible world in which some things are B^+ and A and others are B^+ and not A . What, then, would explain the ban on mixed $B^+/A \& B^+/\neg A$ worlds? A first explanation would simply be the ban on purely numerical and indexical properties in the supervenience base, i.e., the idea that – to echo the above quote from Blackburn – purely numerical and indexical properties *could not* be relevant in determining A -states: If x and y share B^+ , they are exactly similar in all respects that *could* be relevant in determining their respective A -states, which is to say that there can be no mixed $B^+/A \& B^+/\neg A$ world. But since no B^+ determines with conceptual necessity whether something is A , there are conceptually possible worlds of the B^+/A kind and of the $B^+/\neg A$ kind. It is not easy to see what sort of further explanation of the “ban on mixed worlds” could be reasonably called for here, nor is it easy to see why it should worry one group of metaethicists rather than some other. (See the discussion below of why Blackburn thinks that supervenience does pose a special puzzle for non-naturalist realists.)

¹³ Shoemaker 1987, p. 441, Zangwill 1995. Other writers contrast *analytic* and *synthetic*, rather than conceptual and metaphysical, modalities. They would say that B^-/A , if true, is not analytically but synthetically necessary. Cf. Sobel 2001; Strandberg 2004.

[weak] supervenience [...], but also the [strong] supervenience principle ‘If there is a world, w , in which something is B^* and A , then in any world, w' , if something in w' is B^* that thing is A .’¹⁴ I agree with the commentators who opt for strong rather than weak supervenience in the realm of value, but that option is inessential in the present context; Blackburn’s puzzle dissolves on either version. Given B^-/A coupled with strong supervenience, the only metaphysically possible kind of worlds is B^-/A worlds. Given B^-/A , coupled with weak rather than strong supervenience, worlds of the B^-/A kind and the $B^-/-A$ kind are both metaphysically possible. In neither case will there be a metaphysically possible world of the mixed $B^-/A \& B^-/-A$ kind. Since things that share B^- may differ in other respects that *could* be relevant in determining their A -states, mixed worlds remain conceptually possible. But since there is no B^- that determines with conceptual necessity whether something is A , it is hard to discern a mystery here. Blackburn’s puzzle dissolves.

In essence, all this is an application of a point made in 3.1 above, namely that while the supervenience relation, as formulated in (S_{ivo}) and (S_{sim}) , can plausibly be said to hold with conceptual necessity, it is much more controversial to say that there is a maximal or less than maximal non-evaluative property, B , and an evaluative property, A , such that it is conceptually necessary that A supervenes on B . Only those who endorse some version or other of conceptual naturalism about value believe that there are.

As I noted at the outset, it is not easy to pin down exactly why Blackburn thinks that the alleged problem of explaining the “ban on mixed worlds” is especially difficult for non-naturalist realists. I have suggested that once we distinguish carefully between maximal and less than maximal non-evaluative properties, and between different kinds of modalities, the problem does not even arise. Blackburn does not work with different kinds of modality in his 1971 and 1984. He does consider this possibility in his 1985, where, surprisingly, he hints that this would remove the mystery.¹⁵ Blackburn does not go all the way in this direction, however. He maintains that the quasi-realist has the better explanation of why supervenience, as formulated in (S_{ivo}) and (S_{sim}) , holds conceptually.¹⁶

The idea, as I understand it, is this: Evaluative discourse, according to quasi-realism, is essentially expressive of non-cognitive attitudes. Were we to consider it conceptually okay to reach different evaluative verdicts concerning non-evaluatively identical things, the intelligibility of evaluative discourse would be seriously threatened. Hence, supervenience holds conceptually since proper evaluative discourse sets it as a consistency constraint on proper attitudinal responses. The non-naturalist realist can come up with

¹⁴ Shoemaker 1987, p. 441. Cf. McFetridge 1985, p. 249. (Remember that B^* is a maximal non-evaluative property.)

¹⁵ Blackburn 1993b, p. 136

¹⁶ Blackburn 1993b, pp. 137, 143. Cf. 1984, p. 185-87; 1998, p. 315

no such explanation, since for him evaluative discourse is descriptive rather than expressive.

It is true that most realists, non-naturalists and naturalists alike, see evaluative discourse as primarily descriptive of an evaluative reality, rather than primarily expressive of non-cognitive attitudes. But why should this debar non-naturalists from agreeing with Blackburn that were we to violate supervenience, the intelligibility of evaluative discourse would be seriously threatened? As noted in 3.1 above; that the evaluative supervenes on the non-evaluative is something we know in so far as we know what it is for something to be valuable; that is, in so far as we are competent participants in evaluative discourse. It seems to me that not only could the non-naturalist realist accept this, she could go on to insist that our evaluative discourse enjoys metaphysical underpinnings in the form of real evaluative properties that by their very nature must depend on non-evaluative properties.

A lingering appeal in Blackburn's argument might be that his quasi-realist account of supervenience comes with a lighter metaphysical baggage. Unlike the non-naturalist, the quasi-realist need not appeal to philosophically controversial notions such as non-natural properties and metaphysically necessary covariance between distinct (evaluative and non-evaluative) kinds of properties.¹⁷ This thought may not be entirely unjustified, but it seems to me that we have now left behind the specific issue of supervenience; the criticism is now targeted at the very presuppositions of non-naturalist realism. Quasi-realism might well be more parsimonious than non-naturalist realism in metaphysical and epistemological respects (I take it that this is the chief rationale for the prefix 'quasi-'), but as long as the non-naturalist is granted access to his conceptual machinery of non-natural properties and metaphysically necessary covariance between distinct kinds of properties, she faces no special problems of *explaining* supervenience. She can do so as long as she is allowed to remain in her own ballpark, as it were. To demand of the non-naturalist that she explain the supervenience of value without appeal to this conceptual machinery is in effect to demand that she leave that ballpark and give up on non-naturalism.¹⁸

A natural move for the non-naturalist at this juncture is to look for partners in crime, i.e., to provide examples of other areas in which similar accounts of supervenience appear tolerable. Since my aim is not to give full-fledged defence of non-naturalism, but merely to defuse Blackburn's argu-

¹⁷ In the 1993 addenda to his 1985 article, Blackburn concludes that the non-naturalist realist can solve his puzzle only by "drawing a blank check on the synthetic *a priori*." (p. 148).

¹⁸ Interestingly, Howard Sobel 2001, p. 379, reports Blackburn recalling the following episode (in private communication): "I remember John Mackie saying to me back in the seventies that he thought that all I have managed to emphasize was that there are synthetic *a priori* links from the natural to the moral."

ment and defend the thesis that supervenience is metaethically innocuous, I won't pursue this line here.¹⁹

To sum up. I have discussed and deconstructed the most well-known argument to the effect that supervenience is not meta-ethically innocuous. Once deconstructed, the argument evaporates. Any meta-ethical theory should account for the supervenience of value as formulated in (**S_{ivo}**) and (**S_{sim}**) in 2.1 above. All plausible meta-ethical theories do so, albeit, as noted in 2.2, in different terms.

¹⁹ Zangwill 1995, pp. 254-56, and Shafer-Landau 2003 do pursue it.

3. In Defence of Moore's Premise

Some philosophers claim that no sense can be made of the notion of intrinsic or final value, or of something's being good in itself or for its own sake. The chief target of this kind of criticism is G.E. Moore's position in *Principia Ethica*. The thesis under attack is Moore's premise that there is indeed such a thing as intrinsic value. It has been claimed that this is no more than an empty or profoundly confused concept, and it has been recommended that we rid ourselves of it since we would be better off without it.²⁰ Several philosophers making such recommendations take their points of departure in Peter Geach's classical argument that 'good' is only a logically attributive term and not (also) – as Moore and many others have assumed – a logically predicative term.²¹ Geach's argument has been subject to much criticism and I survey the most effective points in 3.2 below.

Still, Geach's argument seems to have a lingering force. It is the take-off for Judith Jarvis Thomson's persistent criticism of Moore's premise. She has in several influential writings repudiated the idea of intrinsic goodness as a philosophical fantasy. Thomson urges us to recognise that "all goodness is goodness in a way" and suggests that all claims about the goodness or value of things must issue from their answering to wants.²²

Mark Bernstein has in a recent article (2001) expressed qualms about intrinsic value on grounds similar to Thomson's. In essence, Bernstein claims that we can make sense of claims about value only when such claims concern what is good or valuable *to* a person, or what benefits a person.

In this section, I aim to defend the Moorean premise that there is indeed such a thing as intrinsic value; it is not an empty or profoundly confused concept, nor is it a mere philosophical fantasy. I intend to run the defence by way of responding to the attacks on intrinsic value launched by Geach, Thomson, and Bernstein. In 3.2 it is argued that Geach's famous argument is faulty as well as question begging. In 3.3 it is suggested that Thomson's position, which she sums up in the slogan that all goodness is goodness in a way, does not warrant outright rejection of the very concept of intrinsic value. At most, it casts doubt on certain *conceptions* of intrinsic value.

²⁰ Bernstein 2001, p. 341.

²¹ Geach 1956. See also Foot 1985.

²² Thomson 1992, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2001, 2003.

In 3.4, I hypothesise that much of the scepticism about intrinsic value discussed so far stems from scepticism about a Moorean unanalysable and non-natural property of intrinsic value. But as I will explain in 3.1, we need not accept the axiological and meta-ethical details of Moore's position in order to agree with him that there is a concept of intrinsic value that is of at least some relevance to ethical theory, and that it consequently is a legitimate object of philosophical inquiry. Once this is realised, the opposition to intrinsic value should begin to wither, for as I suggested in section 1 and will suggest again in 3.2, the notion of intrinsic value is familiar enough from everyday thinking. As will be shown in 3.4, even such a fierce critic as Thomson herself occasionally indicates that she does possess a firmer grasp on intrinsic value than she is officially willing to concede.

In 3.5, I take issue with Bernstein's qualms about intrinsic value. I suggest that these are based on a failure to distinguish between substantive axiology and formal axiology. The general upshot of 3.4 and 3.5 is that the concept of intrinsic value is less elusive than some of its critics have made it out to be.

Having outlined the sense in which I aim to defend Moore's premise, it is vital to be clear about what in Moore I am not about to defend. In line with the methodological approach to formal axiology outlined in section 1, I intend my defence of Moore's premise to be agnostic with respect to the core issues in meta-ethics. I have already said that endorsement of the concept of intrinsic value does not commit us to unanalysable non-natural properties. Hence, I will *not* defend Moore's view of intrinsic goodness as an unanalysable and non-natural property. As noted in the preceding section, talk about a *property* of intrinsic value may sound uncongenial to anti-realist theories about value. But as I have also indicated above, one need not, qua anti-realist, repudiate the *concept* of intrinsic value, as Geach and Thomson et al certainly do.²³ I now need to say a bit more about what we might take this concept to be.

3.1 Intrinsic Value (Sketchily) Characterised

What might it mean to say about something, x , that x is intrinsically valuable? It is, I believe, a highly attractive idea that value judgements are in essence *practical*. By this I mean that they are intimately connected to how one *ought* to respond (in a very wide sense of 'respond', including how to act, what attitudes to take up, what to feel, etc.) to what is judged valuable. The 'ought' I have in mind here is the '*pro tanto* ought', not the 'overall

²³ Gibbard 2003, pp. 30-2, 98, offers an emended, anti-realist friendly, reading of Moore as a non-naturalist not about properties, but about concepts. Interestingly, this approach seems to have been anticipated in Ewing 1959, pp. 50-3.

ought'. This kind of approach to value has a long tradition. Just to mention a few of its representatives: Franz Brentano held that the good is "...that which can be loved with a love that is *correct*,"²⁴ C.D. Broad and A.C. Ewing held that for something to be good is for that thing to be such that it *ought* to be the object of a pro-attitude (where the ought intended is the ought of *fittingness*).²⁵

More recently, T.M. Scanlon has suggested that for something, *x*, to be valuable is for *x* to have certain properties that provide *reasons* to respond to *x* in certain ways (e.g. to take up pro- or anti-attitudes vis-à-vis *x*, or to act in certain ways in regard to *x*).²⁶ Another contemporary representative of this tradition is Michael Zimmerman, who, drawing on the works of R.M. Chisholm, has argued that to say that *x* is intrinsically valuable is to say that there is a *requirement* to favour *x* for *x*'s own sake.²⁷

The respective views of the authors mentioned certainly differ in their details, but they all share the basic assumption that intrinsic value is analysable partly in terms of a normative component ('correctness', 'ought', 'fittingness', 'reason', 'requirement'), and partly in terms of some response concept ('love', 'pro- and anti-attitudes', 'actions', 'favour', etc.).²⁸

That intrinsic value is analysable is something Moore denied during most stages of his career. In *Principia Ethica*, he took intrinsic value to be the unanalysable primitive concept in ethics, in terms of which any other ethical notions such as right action or conduct could be defined.²⁹ Later on, he abandoned this idea and settled for the view that 'intrinsic value' on the one hand and 'ought', 'obligation', 'right', etc, on the other, are not analysable in terms of one another.³⁰

In any case, the general idea that intrinsic value is an essentially practical concept may still be seen as broadly Moorean in spirit. Even though Moore (most of the time) resisted *analyses* of intrinsic goodness in terms of what we ought to do, or the like, he nevertheless took the concept of intrinsic goodness to be intimately connected to what we ought to do, or how we ought to respond. According to Moore, it is precisely in virtue of the fact that it is the chief business of ethics to determine what good conduct is that the concept of intrinsic goodness occupies centre stage in ethical theory.

²⁴ 1969, p. 18 [my italics]. The term for 'correct' in the German original is 'richtig'.

²⁵ See, e.g., Broad 1942, p. 65; Ewing 1947, chs. 5 and 6.

²⁶ Scanlon 1998, p. 97.

²⁷ Zimmerman 2001, ch. 5. See Chisholm 1964.

²⁸ This tradition certainly has other representatives. For a brief but useful historical overview, see Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004, pp. 394-400. See also essays 1 and 5.

²⁹ At one point in *Principia*, however, he explicates the intrinsically good as that which "ought to exist". See Moore 1903, p. 17.

³⁰ At one point at least Moore was prepared to accept the view that 'intrinsic value' is analysable in terms of 'right'. See his 1993, p. 5. Moore toys with the same idea but ultimately rejects it in his 1942.

Since my aim in this section is to respond to some of the philosophers who claim that the concept of intrinsic value is profoundly confused rather than to defend a specific conception of intrinsic value, I shall in this section remain agnostic on whether intrinsic value is analysable, and, if so, which normative concept(s) is (are) primitive and which are analysable in terms of others. I discuss these matters further in 5.1 and in essays 1, 2, and 5. I shall also remain agnostic on whether intrinsic value is to be understood as a monadic concept,³¹ or rather as a relational,³² or a dispositional concept.³³ The crucial point to keep in mind is that intrinsic value is an essentially practical concept, intimately connected to how we ought to respond (in the very wide sense sketched above).

Note that the attempt to analyse or explicate intrinsic value partly in terms of some other *normative* concept and partly in terms of some response concept(s) is not to commit the naturalistic fallacy. The naturalistic fallacy consists in attempting to analyse intrinsic value entirely in *naturalistic*, i.e., *non-normative*, terms. But the terms in which we attempt to analyse intrinsic value need not be entirely non-normative.

At the same time, nothing we have said so far is inconsistent with naturalistic accounts of intrinsic value. The naturalist need not deny that intrinsic value is an essentially practical concept, intimately tied to how we ought to respond. She can couple this view with a straightforward naturalistic analysis of intrinsic value, to which she can tie naturalistic claims about how we ought to respond. Alternatively, she can opt for a naturalistic analysis of the concepts in terms of which she explicates intrinsic value. (I return to naturalistic analyses briefly in section 3.3 below.)

Note also that the general claim that intrinsic value is to be understood as a practical concept is bound up with its normativity, not with motivation. As such, it does not prematurely resolve the meta-ethical debate between motivational internalists and motivational externalists in favour of the former. The claim is not that the concept of intrinsic value is practical in the sense that there is some necessary connection between judgements about intrinsic value and motivation, as motivational internalism typically has it. The claim is, once again, that intrinsic value is a practical concept in the sense of being intimately connected to how we *ought* to respond, not to how we are in fact, or typically, motivated to respond. A motivational externalist, who is an externalist about 'ought', could happily accept this connection.

Let's recap. We need not take these sketchy remarks about intrinsic value to carry any distinctive ontological, epistemological, or psychological implications. Presumably, what many philosophers find dubious about Moore's view is his stress on the existence of a metaphysically and epistemologically

³¹ This was Moore's view, and presumably also the view of J.L. Mackie, see his 1977, ch. 1.

³² See e.g. Broad 1942, p. 65; Ewing 1947, chs. 5 and 6.

³³ See e.g. Brandt 1979, pp. 126-29; 1996; pp. 11f.; Railton 1986; Lewis 1989.

peculiar unanalysable and non-natural property of intrinsic value, which we find out about by means of a special epistemic faculty of intuition.³⁴ But we need not follow Moore in making these claims. It suffices that we recognise that there is a concept of intrinsic value – analysable or unanalysable – that is essentially practical. Philosophers with differing general meta-ethical preferences will of course construe the ontological and epistemological status of this concept in different ways.

Having made some general remarks about what I mean by intrinsic value, I can now begin to discuss, and eventually attempt to rebut, the views of some philosophers who take it to be an empty or profoundly confused concept.

3.2 Geach on Attributive and Predicative Goodness

In 1956, Peter Geach launched a famous attack on the concept of intrinsic goodness.³⁵ Geach's first move is to draw a distinction between logically *attributive* and logically *predicative* adjectives. 'Red' is used attributively in, e.g., 'a red book', and predicatively in, e.g., 'this book is red'. Geach declares that he borrows the terminology from grammar. The philosophical use he makes of the distinction is the following:

I shall say that in a phrase 'an A B' ('A' being an adjective and 'B' being a noun) 'A' is a (logically) predicative adjective if the predication 'is an A B' splits up logically into a pair of predications 'is a B' and 'is A'; otherwise I shall say that A is a (logically) attributive adjective. (1956, p. 33)

So, for instance, Geach claims that we can see that 'red' is a predicative adjective because, e.g., 'x is a red book' splits up logically into the predications 'x is a book' and 'x is red'. By contrast, 'big' and 'small' are attributive adjectives; 'x is a big flea' does not split up logically into 'x is a flea' and 'x is big,' and 'x is a small elephant' does not split up logically into 'x is an elephant' and 'x is small'.

³⁴ The metaphysical and epistemological 'queerness' of this alleged property is what motivated Mackie's error theory about value. Note though, that there is, according to Mackie, nothing amiss with the concept of intrinsic value, as put forward by, e.g., Moore. It is just that, according to Mackie, the peculiar nature of such a property makes it incredible that there is, as a metaphysical matter of fact, any such property (1977, pp. 38-42). Mackie's view is thus very different from Geach's and Thomson's. According to Geach and Thomson, it is the very concept of intrinsic value that is not in order, and not primarily its metaphysics and epistemology. (This is not to say, however, that Geach and Thomson do not find the Moorean notion of intrinsic goodness metaphysically and epistemologically mysterious; see 3.4 below.)

³⁵ Geach tended to talk unqualifiedly about 'goodness' rather than qualifiedly about '*intrinsic* goodness'. This practice may give rise to unnecessary confusion. Worse, it may even make Geach's argument vacuous. See the discussion in 3.3 below.

So far these observations seem largely correct³⁶ albeit, as Geach himself seems aware, hardly sensational. Things get more intriguing in the next paragraph of the article, where Geach states his thesis about good and evil, viz. “that ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are always attributive, not predicative adjectives.”³⁷ Geach charges the moral philosophers he refers to as “Objectivists” – among which he certainly counts Moore and W.D. Ross and other friends of intrinsic value – with ignoring this fact. The Objectivists, says Geach, will not object to the logical distinction between attributive and predicative adjectives, nor will they deny that there is an attributive use of ‘good’. Their mistake is to assume that there is a second, predicative use of ‘good’, akin to what Geach considers genuinely predicative adjectives such as ‘red’, ‘visible’, ‘empty’, etc. Predicative uses of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ as in, e.g., ‘pleasure is good’ and ‘preferring inclination to duty is bad’, are according to Geach mere philosophical inventions with no real meanings, unless they are after all attributive uses in disguise:³⁸

Even when ‘good’ or ‘bad’ stands by itself as a predicate [as in ‘pleasure is good’ and ‘preferring inclination to duty is bad’], and is thus grammatically predicative, some substantive has to be understood; there is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or bad so-and-so. (If I say that something is a good or bad *thing*, either ‘thing’ is a mere proxy for a more descriptive noun to be supplied from the context; or else I am trying to use ‘good’ or ‘bad’ predicatively. The latter attempt is, on my thesis, illegitimate. (1956, p. 34)

The gist of Geach’s attack is thus that the friends of the concept of intrinsic value have simply misapprehended the logical character of ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ Let us now move on to explore how this argument might be countered.

Consider first the claim that there is no such thing as being just good, but only being a good so-and-so. Geach advocates a form of Aristotelian teleology, according to which all claims about the goodness (badness) of a thing must be relativised to a kind to which the thing belongs, and that conveys a standard of goodness (badness) for things of that kind. According to a natural interpretation of this idea, for a thing to be a good so-and-so is for that thing to be a well-functioning specimen of a so-and-so kind (conversely, for a thing to be a bad so-and-so is for that thing to be an ill-functioning specimen of a so-and-so kind).³⁹ For instance, a good knife might be one with which you can cut nice slices of bread, a good philosopher might be one that

³⁶ For doubts about the details of Geach’s examples, see Thomson 1997, p. 277 fn. 5; 2003a, pp. 77f.; Zimmerman 2001, pp. 21f.

³⁷ Geach 1956, p. 33.

³⁸ Geach 1956, pp. 35f.

³⁹ Cf. Pigden (1990, p. 134): “[T]he attributive ‘good’ can be roughly defined as follows: *m* is a good *X* = df. *m* is, or does, to a high or satisfactory degree what *X*s are supposed, or required, to be or do.”

frequently delivers coherent and thought-provoking arguments and who repudiates predicative uses of ‘good’, and so on. Crucially, nothing is merely a good or bad *thing*, since “‘thing’ is too empty a word to convey [...] a standard of goodness.”⁴⁰

But now, what about well-functioning specimens of kinds of things like landmines or thumbscrews?⁴¹ I suppose that something counts as a good landmine insofar as it is, say, not easily discovered by its presumptive victims and insofar as it severely injures whoever steps on it. Similarly, a good thumbscrew is likely to be one that, say, causes its victim considerable pain as the result of a minimal effort on behalf of the torturer. I am pretty certain that I am not alone in holding good (in the attributive sense) landmines and thumbscrews to be very bad, in fact very much worse than bad (in the attributive sense) landmines and thumbscrews. But given Geach’s thesis about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ the question is of course, bad in what sense? We cannot say that good landmines and thumbscrews are simply bad *things*, for then Geach would repeat his contention that “either ‘thing’ is a mere proxy for a more descriptive noun to be supplied from the context; or else I am trying [illegitimately] to use ‘good’ or ‘bad’ predicatively.”

But what could be the more descriptive nouns to be supplied from contexts in which I claim good landmines and thumbscrews to be bad? Obvious candidates are not easy to find. Of course, we could come up with more or less artificial suggestions: Good landmines and thumbscrews may be bad ‘security devices’, as they might make the unlucky victims eager to come back for revenge, or they may be bad ‘peace keeping devices’ as they tend to create misery and suffering rather than peace and understanding between warring parties. But these suggestions, and probably most other alternatives, are likely to strike many people as simply too artificial: Ordinarily, when we say that landmines and thumbscrews are bad we simply do not mean to say that they are bad security devices or bad peace keeping devices, or something like that.⁴²

There is, however, a more promising suggestion that has been carefully elaborated by J.J. Thomson. It is that allegedly predicative uses of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are incomplete, since – as her slogan goes – all goodness (badness) is goodness (badness) in a way. Specifically, Thomson’s view suggests (see 3.3 below) that to say that landmines and thumbscrews are bad is to say that such artifacts are bad *for* people (particularly, I presume, for the poor souls who fall prey to them).

This suggestion merits careful consideration. I discuss it further in the subsections to come. For the time being, I content myself with simply asserting that when I personally deem good landmines or thumbscrews to be very

⁴⁰ Geach (1956, p. 41).

⁴¹ I borrow the thumbscrew example from Brännmark 2002, p. 44.

⁴² This point is also made by Pigden 1990, p. 133.

bad, I ordinarily do not mean to say that they are bad security devices or bad peace keeping devices. Neither, I believe, do I ordinarily mean to say *simply* that they are bad for people (particularly for the poor souls who fall prey to them). Rather, I mean at least in part to say something to the effect that good landmines and thumbscrews are devilish instruments that, because of what they are, ought to be met with disgust. It seems, then, that to some extent at least I am using ‘bad’ predicatively, since I am not claiming merely that good landmines are bad so-and-so’s.⁴³ This is illegitimate, according to Geach. But insofar as other people (especially those who are not trained philosophers) find nothing amiss with these claims, serious doubt is cast on Geach’s thesis that predicative uses of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are mere inventions of philosophers (more on this point below). As Pigden puts it:

[The predicative ‘good’] is *not* just a philosophers’ word ... Consider the[se] idioms ... ‘Pleasure is good’; ‘Friendship is a good we tend to neglect’; ‘Economists tend to speak as if maximizing g.d.p. were the sole good’; ‘Surely the destruction of the human race by nuclear weapons would be as bad as anything could be.’ Are these only to be heard in philosophy departments? On the contrary, they resound from every pulpit; they crop up in self-development seminars, textbooks on social work theory, in social and political debates *and wherever moral thinking is going on*. (1990, p. 141) [my italics]

I now turn to two more basic and perhaps more obvious objections. As noted, Geach himself is well aware that his targets, i.e., the friends of intrinsic value whom he calls Objectivists, will not balk at the claim that ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are sometimes used attributively. As a matter of fact, W.D. Ross – one of Geach’s targets – highlighted the distinction between attributive and predicative uses of ‘good’ already in 1930. Ross even acknowledged that in everyday speech, the attributive use is much the commoner.⁴⁴ Unlike Geach, however, he did not draw the conclusion that there is no legitimate predicative use of ‘good’ in which it is not relativised to a kind but is “used as an absolute term.”⁴⁵

Ross’s observation prompts the suspicion that Geach has simply jumped too hastily from the plausible premise that ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are often used attributively to the highly debatable conclusion that there are no legitimate predicative uses of these terms. One is inclined to ask with Charles Pigden (1990, p. 131) “what is wrong with linguistic pluralism? Why not a peaceful coexistence between the [attributive and predicative] uses?” This modest query finds no unequivocal answer in Geach’s argument.

⁴³ There is a possibility that my claim might be paraphrased in terms of attributive goodness; the claim might be that well-functioning landmines or thumbscrews are good objects of negative responses, such as disgust. I return to this possibility in footnote 48 below.

⁴⁴ Ross 1930, p. 65.

⁴⁵ Ross 1930, p. 67.

In the end, I suspect that much of Geach's scepticism about intrinsic value is nurtured by a scepticism about an unanalysable and non-natural property of intrinsic goodness à la Moore.⁴⁶ But as already indicated above, scepticism about such a *property* need not sanction scepticism about the *concept* of intrinsic value. (I say more about this in 3.4.) So the first point of basic and rather obvious criticism of Geach is that he might have jumped too hastily to his conclusion.

The second point is closely related to the first. It is that Geach's argument appears question begging. Recall Geach's test by which he distinguishes logically attributive adjectives from logically predicative adjectives; the latter type splits up logically into a pair of predications whilst the former doesn't. 'Red' in 'x is a red book' splits up logically into 'x is a book' and 'x is red', but 'good' in 'x is a good cricketer' does not split up logically into 'x is a cricketer' and 'x is good'. Hence, says Geach, 'red' is a predicative term, while 'good' is attributive. But a natural response to Geach at this stage of the argument is that the reason why 'x is a good cricketer' does not so split up is precisely that 'good' is here used attributively. Think of a context in which 'good' is used to signify intrinsic goodness, as in, e.g., 'x is an intrinsically good experience'. Surely, a proponent of the concept of intrinsic value would say that this phrase splits up logically into 'x is an experience' and 'x is intrinsically good'.⁴⁷ Geach could object that this predicative use of 'good' is illegitimate, but this is merely to state an opposing view; it is not to give an argument. It appears, then, that Geach is able to establish his conclusion with such ease because he has settled in advance for the view that only attributive uses of 'good' are legitimate. Consequently, he provides only examples of such uses of 'good'. This does indeed seem question begging.⁴⁸

What has been said so far constitutes to my mind quite severe criticism of Geach's view. It would be far too optimistic, however, to hope that all doubts about the intelligibility of the concept of intrinsic value have been put to rest. Geach's argument does have some lingering force. For instance, I mentioned above that proponents of a view like Geach's could counter the first objection by appealing to the idea that all goodness is goodness in a

⁴⁶ Some evidence for this are found on pp. 35-6. See 3.4 below.

⁴⁷ Zimmerman 2001, p. 21.

⁴⁸ See Pigden 1990, pp. 138-9. I have proceeded on the common assumption that Geach's view that all legitimate uses of 'good' ('bad') are attributive cannot be accepted by friends of intrinsic value. But this might be a good place to pause and question this common assumption. Given what was said in 3.1 about intrinsic value being an essentially practical concept, we might paraphrase claims such as 'x is intrinsically good (bad)' as 'x is a good object of a positive (negative) response for x's own sake'. In this paraphrase, 'good' is used attributively. Geach would presumably complain that 'object of a positive (negative) response' is too empty to convey a standard of goodness, but this does not alter the fact that friends of intrinsic value could accept the idea that all legitimate uses of 'good' ('bad') are attributive. They would reject, however, Geach's Aristotelian teleology, according to which all claims about goodness must be relativised to a kind that conveys a standard of goodness. I am indebted to Sven Danielsson for raising this possibility.

way, and in particular to the notion of ‘goodness-for’. And they might maintain that goodness-for is less elusive than the notion of intrinsic value. It is time now to turn to an investigation of this view.

3.3 Thomson’s Ways of Goodness

Drawing on Geach’s argument, Judith Jarvis Thomson has persistently championed the above-mentioned tenet that all goodness is goodness in a way. By this she does not mean to say, with Geach, that for any statement to the effect that something is good “some substantive has to be understood.”⁴⁹ As Thomson points out, this claim seems questionable for some uses of ‘good *x*’. For instance, if it is claimed that *x* is good for some individual, what is the substantive that has to be understood?⁵⁰ However, Thomson endorses Geach’s fundamental claim that ‘good’ is a logically attributive adjective. Indeed, her tenet that all goodness is goodness in a way is meant to be a concise formulation of this alleged insight. What she means to say is that for any statement to the effect that some *x* is good, some way or other in which *x* is good has to be understood: At the most fundamental level, things can be good *for* people (more on this below). At a less fundamental level, things can be good *to* look at, listen to, or taste. Things can also be good *for use* in doing or making this or that, and people can be good *at* doing things.⁵¹ Being good *for*, being good *to*, being good *for use*, and being good *at*, are various examples of what Thomson calls “first-order ways of being good.”⁵²

It would of course be crazy to deny that the word ‘good’ is frequently used in all these kinds of ways. It is hardly news that words may have multiple meanings and different areas of use. There is no reason to believe that ‘good’ is an exception to this rule. (Recall the point about linguistic pluralism in the previous subsection.) What makes Thomson’s observations interesting is her further claim that these kinds of ways exhaust the ways in which the word ‘good’ may be sensibly used. In particular, she urges, there is no such thing as something being good or valuable in itself or for its own sake – or, as Thomson puts it, there is no pure unadulterated goodness.⁵³

It is not entirely clear what or whom Thomson opposes in claiming that there is no pure unadulterated goodness, for it is not clear what ‘pure’ and ‘unadulterated’ are supposed to mean in this context. Thomson is surely

⁴⁹ Geach 1956, p. 34.

⁵⁰ Thomson 1997, p. 278. Cf. the examples with good landmines and thumbscrews above.

⁵¹ See Thomson 1997, pp. 289f. Cf. her 1992, pp. 96-8; 1994, pp. 8-10; 1996, pp. 128ff.; 2001, pp. 19-20; 2003, p. 73.

⁵² There are also, according to Thomson, “second-order ways of being good”, such as being just, kind, generous, and the like. Thomson takes these ways of being good to “rest on” first-order ways of being good 1997, pp. 276ff., which is why I focus on that notion.

⁵³ Thomson 1996, pp. 129f.

shadow-boxing if what she has in mind is something like an idea of goodness as ‘independent’ or ‘free-floating’ from other, non-evaluative, properties. True enough, Moore and other friends of intrinsic value have sometimes been caricatured as holding views according to which evaluative properties are “floating, as it were, quite free from anything else whatever, but cropping up here and there, quite contingently and for no reason.”⁵⁴ But Moore for one would certainly not deny that goodness or value is a dependent or supervenient property. For instance, he stated in a reply to C.D. Broad that

[...] I should never have thought of suggesting that goodness is “non-natural”, unless I had supposed that it was “derivative” in the sense that, whenever a thing is good (in the sense in question [i.e., intrinsically]) its goodness (in Mr. Broad’s words) “depends” on the presence of certain non-ethical characteristics” possessed by the thing in question: I have always supposed that it did so “depend”, in the sense that, if a thing is good (in my sense) then that it is so *follows* from the fact that it possesses certain natural intrinsic properties, which are such that from the fact that it is good, it does *not* follow conversely that it has those properties. (1942, p. 588).

Now, Thomson does at one point make clear that her slogan that “all goodness is goodness in a way” is not about the supervenience of value.⁵⁵ Perhaps, then, the denial of ‘pure and unadulterated goodness’ is to be understood as the denial of a notion of unqualified or “generic” goodness.⁵⁶

It is notable in this context that Geach’s and Thomson’s attacks on intrinsic value are muddled by the fact that they tend to talk about goodness in general rather than intrinsic goodness in particular. As Michael Zimmerman has pointed out, this tendency is both understandable and excusable since Moore and his contemporary friends of intrinsic goodness also tended to talk unqualifiedly about goodness, rather than qualifiedly about intrinsic goodness.⁵⁷ But it must be remembered that when friends of intrinsic value claim something to be intrinsically good, it is not claimed to be good in just any random way, but in some most particular way. Many friends of intrinsic goodness would say that something is intrinsically good if it ought to be in some way favoured for its own sake, or something to that effect (recall the sketchy characterisation of intrinsic value in 3.1, and the references given there).

The exact form of the analysis is of course controversial, as is the question whether the concept of intrinsic goodness is at all analysable or whether it merely allows for paraphrases. It might be that by the phrase ‘pure and

⁵⁴ Warnock 1967, p. 14. Warnock acknowledges, however, that Ross did recognise the dependence of the evaluative on the non-evaluative (p. 12). In Ross’s terms, the evaluative is “consequential” on the non-evaluative. See Ross 1930.

⁵⁵ Thomson 1994, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Zimmerman 2001, pp. 18-21, discusses this possible interpretation.

⁵⁷ Zimmerman 2001, pp. 18f.; 2004, pp. 546-48.

unadulterated goodness,' Thomson intends all kinds of goodness that are not goodness in one of the ways envisaged by her, and this of course includes intrinsic goodness. But if this is so, this seems to be an unhappy choice of terminology, since 'pure and unadulterated goodness' does not capture what philosophers writing about intrinsic goodness traditionally have had in mind.

This suggests that the idea that all goodness is goodness in a way need not be worrying to friends of intrinsic value.⁵⁸ To be sure, what is intrinsically good is good in a way very different from what is, say, instrumentally good, or attributively or functionally good, or good in yet some other way.

But presumably, this won't impress Thomson. She is likely to maintain that something cannot be good unless it is good in one of the ways envisaged by her; i.e., unless it is good *for*, good *to*, good *for use*, or good *at*. Crucially, being intrinsically good – good *for its own sake*, or good *in itself* – is not among the ways in which a thing can be good. According to Thomson's intuition, "the goodness of a thing must issue in some way or other from its *answering to wants*."⁵⁹ Similarly, Thomson concludes in her 1997 article that "first-order ways of being good rest on benefiting in appropriate ways, which may involve pleasing, or answering to wants."⁶⁰ Things that are good to look at or listen to, or good to taste, are things that please – or satisfy the wants of – someone⁶¹ who looks at or listens to them, or tastes them; things that are good for use in doing or making this or that are things that are useful in doing or making this or that in ways people typically want them done or made; people who are good at doing things, e.g., hanging wall-paper, are people who are capable of hanging wall-paper the way people typically want it done.⁶²

Now, it appears that if the thesis that the goodness of a thing must issue in some way or other from its answering to wants is to be at all plausible, the wants in question must be subject to some kind of idealisation constraints. Thomson herself recognises this and says that the relevant wants are those an individual would have "in ideal conditions of full information about costs, assessed in a 'cool hour,' and lack of improper preference bendings."⁶³

But this is highly reminiscent of what philosophers more or less inclined towards naturalism about goodness (an inclination I take it that Thomson

⁵⁸ This is emphasised in Zimmerman 2001, pp. 24f.

⁵⁹ Thomson 1996, p. 133. [italics in original]

⁶⁰ Thomson 1997, p. 298.

⁶¹ But presumably not just anyone. In her 1996, pp. 138-40, Thomson concedes that for a thing to be "really" good to look at cannot be merely for that thing to be such that some people want to look at it, or enjoy looking at it. The relevant judgement must come from competent judges. Thomson concedes, however, that on her theory it might not be easy to determine who the competent judges are.

⁶² Thomson 1997, pp. 289f.

⁶³ Thomson 1997, p. 296. In her 2001, p. 53, Thomson similarly states that "the relevant wants are those an individual would have 'in a cool hour', in possession of full relevant information, and under no improper pressure to conform his will to that of others."

shares; see the next subsection) have said about *intrinsic* goodness. For instance, G.H. von Wright 1963, p. 103, notes that in his treatment, “[t]he notion of being wanted in itself is the nearest equivalent [...] to the notion of *intrinsic value* in Moore and some other writers.” According to Richard Brandt 1979, p. 128, the proposition that “Knowledge is good in itself” is analysable in terms of the proposition that “Knowledge is something any fully rational person would want for himself, for no further reason.” In his 1996, pp. 12f., Brandt similarly characterises the intrinsically good, roughly, as what would be non-instrumentally desired by a person in possession of full and vivid factual information. Similar accounts have been propounded by, among others, Peter Railton 1986 and David Lewis 1989.

Thomson never gives serious consideration to the possibility of explicating the concept of intrinsic value along such naturalistically flavoured lines,⁶⁴ and it is not clear how and why she would object to it. This suggests that Thomson’s intuition that all goodness must issue in some way or other from answering to wants does not warrant outright rejection of the concept of intrinsic value. At most, it may shed doubt on certain conceptions of intrinsic value. But it is fully consistent with other conceptions, namely those that do analyse intrinsic value in terms of what would be non-instrumentally desired by an individual in possession of full and vivid factual information, or something to that effect.⁶⁵ At this juncture, we should keep in mind, that it is far from obvious that we should endorse the idea that goodness must issue from answering to wants in the first place. After all, Thomson has merely reported her intuition to that effect, she has not given an argument in its favour.⁶⁶

The upshot is that it is misleading to construe Thomson’s criticism as broadly targeted at the concept of intrinsic value *per se*, rather than narrowly targeted at certain conceptions of intrinsic value. I shall elaborate on this point below. I shall also suggest that Thomson herself occasionally demonstrates possession of a firmer grasp on the notion of intrinsic value than she is officially willing to concede. This latter point provides further support to a remark made in passing in this section and the first; namely that the concept of intrinsic value is not alien to everyday thinking, and that it is less elusive than some of its opponents have made it out to be.

⁶⁴ At one point (1996, p. 133 fn. 7), Thomson refers to the theory suggested by Lewis 1989, and describes it as a theory about how a thing’s “(pseudo-)property” of goodness issues from its answering to wants.

⁶⁵ We may note here that such analyses are likely to carry implications for the semantic, ontological, and epistemological status of evaluative judgements. Accepting such an analysis of intrinsic value thus implies that the methodological agnosticism with respect to the core issues in meta-ethics is abandoned.

⁶⁶ Zimmerman 2001, p. 27.

3.4 Thomson and the Elusiveness of Intrinsic Value

I have already aired the suspicion that much of the scepticism concerning intrinsic value advocated by philosophers such as Geach and Thomson stem from aversions against Moore's idea of an unanalysable non-natural property of goodness. For instance, Geach observes that the Objectivists who believe that there is a legitimate predicative use of 'good' tend to think of the property corresponding to this use as a non-natural property. But he complains that "nobody has ever given a coherent and understandable account of what it is for a [property] to be non-natural."⁶⁷ Thomson similarly believes that a non-natural property of goodness, as envisaged by Moore and others, is metaphysically and epistemologically mysterious.⁶⁸ She sees her elaboration of the thesis that all goodness is goodness in a way as a project of demystification and naturalisation of goodness and badness.⁶⁹

It is of course far from illegitimate to criticise the Moorean idea of an unanalysable non-natural property of intrinsic value, but as we have just seen, it is misleading to describe such criticism as targeted broadly at the concept of intrinsic value in general. As we have also seen, theorising about intrinsic value does not commit us to non-natural properties. Once it is freed of such metaphysical commitments, much of the antipathies to intrinsic value should begin to wither, for the concept is familiar enough from everyday thinking to make it a *prima facie* legitimate object of philosophical inquiry. In fact, even such a fierce critic of intrinsic value as Thomson herself occasionally demonstrates implicit but clear enough understanding of the concept.

Michael Zimmerman has highlighted one such occasion;⁷⁰ her critique of what she calls Hedonism About Goodness, i.e., roughly, the view that "an event is good just in case it consists in someone's feeling pleased and bad just in case it consists in someone's feeling pain" and that an event is better (worse) than another just in case it contains more pleasure (pain).⁷¹ On Thomson's construal, Hedonism About Goodness holds not only that pleasure (pain) is the only good (evil), but also that all pleasures (pains) are good (evil). She goes on to criticise Hedonism About Goodness on the ground that it implies that a man's feeling pleased at another's pain may be a good event. Against this view, Thomson reports her own intuition that a man's feeling pleased at another's pain is not a good event.⁷²

What, in the light of Thomson's earlier remarks about intrinsic goodness and goodness-for, should we take this to mean? Assume that Mary's feeling pain is good for John in the sense that Mary's pain pleases John. Assume

⁶⁷ Geach 1957, p. 35.

⁶⁸ Thomson 1996, p. 128.

⁶⁹ Thomson 1996, pp. 127ff.

⁷⁰ See Zimmerman 2001, p. 32, fn. 56; 2004, p. 548.

⁷¹ Thomson 2001, pp. 9f.

⁷² Thomson 2001, p. 12.

also that the intensity and duration of John's pleasure exceed the intensity and duration of Mary's pain. Thomson's intuition says that this is not a good event even though she presumably agrees that it is good for John to a larger extent than it is bad for Mary. In what sense, then, is it "not a good event"? The obvious answer seems to be that it is not an intrinsically good event. Incidentally, Thomson will here find herself in substantive agreement with many proponents of the concept of intrinsic value who reject the view she calls Hedonism About Goodness. It is not hard, then, to agree with Zimmerman's verdict that Thomson's objection to Hedonism About Goodness "clearly indicates that she has more than a passing grasp of the concept of intrinsic value, and it is curious that, once having exploited her intuitions in this respect, she proceeds to repudiate them." (2004, 548)

Another observation along these lines is that although Thomson repudiates what she calls pure unadulterated goodness she does hold that there is a concept of 'just plain oughtness'; the question whether a person just plain ought to do such and such is a real one, according to Thomson (2001, p. 46).⁷³ But surely, the same semantical worries about incompleteness Thomson raises about goodness can be raised about her own concept of 'just plain oughtness', or more widely, about the general deontological idea of a categorically binding ought. If it can be plausibly maintained that the goodness of a thing must issue from its answering to wants, one wonders why it isn't equally plausible to maintain that all oughts must issue from wants. Differently put, it seems that just as Thomson claims that all goodness must be goodness in a way, one might make the parallel claim that all oughts must be "oughts of a kind."⁷⁴

But Thomson is of course reluctant to draw this conclusion. She does indeed endorse the idea of a categorically binding ought.⁷⁵ Again, I take this to indicate that what Thomson really finds so elusive is not the generic notion of intrinsic value, but rather the specific Moorean conception of intrinsic goodness as an unanalysable and non-natural property. The concept of 'ought' she finds less elusive. This is yet another respect in which she is in agreement with a number of philosophers that consider themselves friends of intrinsic value. For instance, A.C. Ewing at one point reports that

[...] I found that I could not form a clear concept of intrinsic goodness without including in it the concept of ought, but that I could find a clear concept of ought without including in it the concept of good. (1947, p. 174; cf. p. 178)

⁷³ Incidentally, this is a point where Thomson seems to be in disagreement with Geach. According to Geach, what a person should (not) do, and why she should (not) do so must be linked to her wants. See his 1956, pp. 39f.

⁷⁴ This point is ably pressed at Thomson in Phillips 2003. (Phillips's direct concern is to respond to Thomson's attack on consequentialism, rather than to defend the concept of intrinsic value.)

⁷⁵ This is the advice part of her 2001 book *Goodness and Advice*. See ch. 2.

This leads Ewing to analyse ‘intrinsic value’ in terms of ‘ought’ (see section 5.1, and essays 1 and 5). I noted in the previous subsection that given that Thomson accepts that the wants from which the goodness of things must issue must be appropriately idealised, it is unclear how and why she would object to a characterisation of intrinsic value in terms of what would be non-instrumentally desired by an individual in possession of full and vivid factual information, or something to that effect. Now, given that Thomson avowedly endorses the notion of just plain oughtness, it is equally unclear on what grounds she would object to analyses of intrinsic goodness in terms of this notion, along the rough lines suggested by Ewing.

3.5 Bernstein and the Elusiveness of Intrinsic Value

We have seen that Thomson considers it intuitively plausible that something cannot be good unless it somehow constitutes a benefit to some individual. In a recent article (2001) Mark Bernstein puzzles over what some philosophers have said about intrinsic value on grounds similar to Thomson’s. He declares that he can make sense of an item’s being intrinsically valuable only when this is understood as the claim that the item has “a value *to* a person.”⁷⁶ Bernstein goes on to say that

Specifically, I understand how ‘value for its own sake’ makes a person who possesses it either better or worse off. I therefore understand intrinsic value as a sort of *value*. (2001, p. 333) [italics in original]

How is this claim intended to shed doubt on existing theories of the concept of intrinsic value? Bernstein discusses a set of related views of intrinsic value, including on the one hand the Brentanian view that the intrinsically valuable is that which can be loved with a love that is correct, and Broad’s and Ewing’s views of the intrinsically valuable as a fitting object of a pro-attitude, and on the other hand Moore’s and Ross’s views according to which the intrinsically valuable is that which would retain its value even when existing in complete isolation.⁷⁷

The joint shortcoming Bernstein identifies in these suggested explications of the concept of intrinsic value is that they fail “to provide enlightenment why those items we deem as intrinsically valuable are, in fact, valuable” (p. 335), they “cannot shine any light on what makes the intrinsically valuable

⁷⁶ Bernstein 2001, p. 331 [italics in original]. Thomson and Bernstein are by no means alone in having this intuition. I take it to be a perennial one in ethical theory. See, e.g., Derek Parfit’s discussion of what he calls “the person-affecting view” in his 1984, and Larry Temkin’s discussion of what he calls “The Slogan” in his 1993.

⁷⁷ Moore 1903, p. 94; 1963, p. 38; Ross 1930, p. 73. See Lemos 1994, ch. 1, for discussions of Moore’s and Ross’s ‘isolation view’, and how it relates to the views of Brentano, Broad, and Ewing. See also section 4 below.

[...] valuable” (p. 337), whereas if we say that an item is valuable because it makes a person better off, we do shed light on what makes that item valuable. Bernstein consequently concludes with the recommendation that we rid ourselves of the concept of intrinsic value understood as a kind of value something has ‘for its own sake’ or ‘in itself.’ If we still choose to stick with the term ‘intrinsic value’, we should explicate it in terms of ‘values *to* persons’.⁷⁸ Thus explicated, Bernstein claims that “we have no problem of conceiving of intrinsic value [...] for it is simply that which satisfies or frustrates our desires for nothing other than itself.”⁷⁹

Insofar as Bernstein searches for an account that provides enlightenment why those items we deem as intrinsically valuable are, in fact, valuable, or equivalently, an account that shines light on what makes the intrinsically valuable valuable, he is searching for a *substantive* axiological theory. But the theories of the concept of intrinsic value offered by on the one hand, Brentano, Broad, and Ewing, and on the other hand by Moore and Ross, are *formal* axiological theories. That is, they are theories about what it is for something to be valuable as opposed to what makes something valuable. The formal axiological theories Bernstein criticises are in fact fully compatible with his favoured view that what makes an object (positively) valuable is that it serves what we desire. Bernstein’s basic mistake is thus his failure to recognise the distinction between formal and substantive axiology, as outlined in section 1 above.

⁷⁸ Bernstein 2001, p. 341.

⁷⁹ Bernstein 2001, p. 335.

4. Value Typology

In section 1, I talked about intrinsic value and final value, and about something's being valuable in itself and for its own sake. In the last section I have, for ease of exposition and in order to avoid terminological discrepancies from the authors discussed, talked mainly about intrinsic value. It is time now to approach the question how these idioms are related. This leads head-on into value typology.

To get going, it is helpful to start with an intuitively familiar contrast, *viz.* that between a thing's being valuable as an end, or for its own sake, and a thing's being valuable as a means, or for the sake of some other thing. Hume's example, which I referred to at the outset of this introduction provides an illustration: With Hume, we assumed that exercise is valuable not for its own sake, but for the sake of – i.e., as a means to – some other thing that is valuable for its own sake. This other thing that is valuable for its own sake might be pleasure. We might say, then, that exercise is an instance of *instrumental* value, while pleasure is finally valuable. But we may also want to say that the value of exercise is *extrinsic*, as it depends on the value of something that is external to it, whereas the value of pleasure is *intrinsic*, as it does not depend, we assume, on something external to it. So we end up with two distinctions concerning value; that between final and instrumental value, and that between intrinsic and extrinsic value.⁸⁰

Instrumental value is one type of *derivative* value. Something has a derivative value if it owes its value to the value of something else. An instrumentally valuable object owes its value to the final value of whatever it is a means to. There is at least one other type of derivative value; something has a derivative value if it owes its value to one or more of its elements (see section 5.2 and essays 3 and 4 for further discussion and illustrations).

There are certainly other types of value than those I will discuss in this chapter (some are briefly discussed in 5.3 and essay 3).⁸¹ I have no ambitions of offering an exhaustive typology of value, as that would take us way too far afield from the core subject of this thesis. I shall rather focus on a distinction that is of crucial importance to what I say in this introduction and in the following essays, *viz.* the distinction between final and intrinsic value. It is indeed controversial whether there is a real distinction to be made here at all.

⁸⁰The *locus classicus* of these distinctions in modern times is Korsgaard 1983.

⁸¹For further discussions, see, e.g., Bradley 1998, Zimmerman 2001, appendix.

As we shall see, many philosophers have assumed that there is not; in their view, all final values are intrinsic values.⁸² Recently, however, several philosophers have offered counterexamples to this view. According to some of these philosophers, whether all final values are intrinsic values is closely related to the issue concerning the ontological nature of value bearers. However, one upshot of this section is that it is questionable how closely related these issues really are.

4.1 Types of Value: Final vs. Intrinsic, For Its Own Sake vs. In Itself

Shelly Kagan has distinguished between two concepts, “both of which have some claim to being considered concepts of intrinsic value” (1998, p. 278). First, there is the notion I have referred to above as final value; something is finally valuable if and only if it is valuable *for its own sake*, or, as Kagan prefers to put it, *as an end*. Second, there is the notion of an object’s being valuable *in itself*, i.e., independently of any other object external to it. This latter idea finds expression in the ‘isolation test’ of intrinsic value, endorsed by, among others, Moore and Ross. According to the isolation test, something is intrinsically valuable if and only if it would retain its value even when existing in complete isolation. Thus, the final value of an object is intrinsic if and only if it supervenes exclusively on properties intrinsic to the object; the final value of an object is extrinsic if and only if it supervenes (partly, at least) on properties non-intrinsic to the object.

According to what Kagan labels “the dominant philosophical tradition”, the two notions of ‘being valuable for its own sake’ and ‘being valuable in itself’ are extensionally equivalent. Extrinsic final value has within this tradition been considered an impossibility. I shall refer to this view as *intrinsicism* (see 5.3 and essay 4 for further discussions). It says the following:

Intrinsicism

Final value supervenes exclusively on features intrinsic to its bearer

As I will show in a moment, the intrinsicist view is traceable at least back to G.E. Moore. Among the philosophers that have endorsed intrinsicism in more recent times are Ben Bradley 2002, R.M. Chisholm 1986, Fred Feldman 2000, Noah Lemos 1994, and Michael Zimmerman 2001a, 2001b. Among the philosophers that have recently argued for the possibility of extrinsic final value are Shelly Kagan 1998, Christine Korsgaard 1983, John O’Neill 1992, and Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000,

⁸² The possibility of non-final intrinsic value has been much less frequently discussed. I return to it in 5.3.

2001, 2003. In Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen's terminology, 'intrinsic value' is a subcategory of the wider category of 'final value': The final value of an object is intrinsic if it supervenes exclusively on features intrinsic to the object, otherwise it is extrinsic. Final value can thus be either intrinsic or extrinsic, according to Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen. In contrast, Kagan suggests a terminological shift, according to which the term 'intrinsic value' is reserved for value 'for its own sake' or value 'as an end.' Intrinsic value can thus be extrinsic, according to Kagan. Like Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, Kagan doubts whether intrinsic values as ends as opposed to non-intrinsic values as ends are of any special interest. Kagan therefore prefers to "leave it to others to come up with a short label for the value an object has simply by virtue of its intrinsic properties."⁸³

Personally, I find Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen's terminological line preferable to Kagan's. There is a striking ungainliness in saying that intrinsic value may be extrinsic. But terminology aside, Kagan and Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen agree on the crucial point that the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction cuts across the category of final value.

Before discussing some putative counter-examples to intrinsicism, let us take a look at its origins and motivations. Like much else in the value theoretical debate, the intrinsicist view can be traced back to the writings of G.E. Moore. I believe that Moore's line of reasoning can be roughly reconstructed along the following lines: The theoretical point of departure is that the notion of fundamental interest is that of 'being valuable for its own sake'. For instance, Moore at one point declared that

An expression [which may serve as a paraphrase of 'intrinsically good'] which is fairly commonly used, and which is, I think, intelligible to everybody, is that which we use when we say of an experience which we have had that it 'was worth having *for its own sake*'. (1959, p. 94) [my italics]

Two contemporary advocates of intrinsicism who share the idea that 'value for its own sake' is the notion of crucial interest are Noah Lemos and Michael Zimmerman. Drawing on the works of such philosophers as Franz Brentano 1889, C.D. Broad 1942, A.C. Ewing 1947,⁸⁴ and R.M. Chisholm 1986, Lemos starts with the idea that "being intrinsically good may be understood in terms of its being correct or fitting to love or like that thing in and for itself or *for its own sake*".⁸⁵ Zimmerman acknowledges the conceptual distinction between final value (value for its own sake) and intrinsic value (value in itself), and like Moore and Lemos he concedes that his primary concern is "to give an account of the nature of *final* [...] value, that is,

⁸³ Kagan p. 293

⁸⁴ We may note in passing that there is evidence that Ewing was not an adherent of the intrinsicist view. See, e.g., his 1947, pp. 114, 207.

⁸⁵ Lemos 1994, p. 6 [my italics].

of what it is for something to be [...] valuable [...] *for its own sake*”.⁸⁶ At the same time, Lemos and Zimmerman agree with Moore that such value supervenes exclusively on features intrinsic to its bearer, i.e., on features that the object possesses independently of any object(s) external to it.

In his seminal essay “The Conception of Intrinsic Value,” Moore stated that

To 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. (1922a, p. 286)

Moore later referred to this idea as “perhaps the most important thing I want to say about [intrinsic value]” (1993, p. 22). (I’ll say more about Lemos’s and Zimmerman’s views on intrinsicism in 5.2 and 5.3 below.)

But why did Moore make the assumption that the value an object possesses for its own sake, i.e., its final value, must supervene exclusively on its intrinsic properties, i.e., be intrinsic? One reason might have been the attractions he saw in the isolation test. The test does provide a neat method of determining whether something is valuable for its own sake, but its cogency hinges, of course, on whether intrinsicism is ultimately defensible.⁸⁷ In addition, I believe that there are at least two other explanations worth mentioning. The first is Moore’s eagerness to separate the notion of value as a means from the utterly different notion of value as an end. According to Moore, “to avoid confusion between means and end, it is absolutely essential to consider each distinguishable quality, *in isolation*, in order to decide what value it possesses.”⁸⁸ The second has to do with the organicity of value. According to Moore,

[...] if we see a whole state to be valuable, and also see that one element of that state has no value *by itself*, then [it is a fallacy to suppose that] the other element, *by itself*, must have all the value which belongs to the whole state. (1903, p. 93 [italics in original])

Moore considered this supposition fallacious because it ignores the fact that “the value of a whole must not be assumed to be the same as the sum of the values of its parts” (1903, p. 28). This is in effect Moore’s famous doctrine of organic unities (I’ll say more about this in 5.3 below). To illustrate: Moore endorsed the substantive axiological view that enjoyment of beauty is a clear instance of something that is to a considerable degree good for its own sake. Nonetheless, he took beauty by itself to possess little or no value

⁸⁶ Zimmerman 2001a, p. 25 [italics in original]. See also Zimmerman 2001b, p. 125.

⁸⁷ That the isolation test is indeed attractive is revealed by the fact that a number of prominent value theorists have endorsed it. In addition to Moore and Ross, versions of the test have been favoured by, e.g., Bradley 2002; Chisholm 1986; Lemos 1994; Zimmerman 2001.

⁸⁸ Moore 1903, p. 93.

for its own sake. But he did not draw the conclusion that all the value of an instance of enjoyment of beauty is due to the value of the enjoyment (pleasure). Rather, the great intrinsic value that belongs to a whole such as enjoyment of beauty is due to the organic effect of the combination of its parts; the pleasure and the beauty. This value is intrinsic to the whole. Moore thus believed that employing the isolation test helps us realise the truth of the principle of organic unities.

Let us recap. We have seen that there is a conceptual distinction between something's being valuable for its own sake and something's being valuable in itself; something is valuable for its own sake if and only if it is valuable as an end, something is valuable in itself if and only if its value supervenes exclusively on intrinsic features. The intrinsicist view, stemming from the writings of G.E. Moore, takes the two notions to be extensionally equivalent. I provided some explanations of why Moore adopted this view. Recently, however, intrinsicism has been challenged by a number of authors who have offered putative examples of extrinsic final values. In the next subsection we shall take a closer look at some of these examples.

4.2 Examples of Extrinsic Final Values

Christine Korsgaard was among the first to highlight the possibility of extrinsic final values. She writes:

An example of [something possessing extrinsic final value] would be something that was good as an end because of the interest that someone took in it, or the desire that someone had for it, for its own sake. (1983, p. 252)

On this view, a pop song may possess extrinsic final value because of the fact that people like and enjoy it, for its own sake. The drawback of examples like this one is that they presuppose an implausible form of 'axiological opportunism'.⁸⁹ What should we say about the value of, say, a pop song that some people like for its own sake, while other people dislike it for its own sake? Surely, it cannot simultaneously be valuable for its own sake and disvaluable for its own sake. To say that its final value at a certain time is determined by how many people like and dislike it at that time would be opportunistic in the extreme. One way of avoiding the opportunism might be to run the example by appeal to hypothetical attitudes of ideally situated observers, rather than to peoples' actual attitudes.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Kagan 1998, p. 281f., appeals to similar examples in arguing for the possibility of extrinsic final values, and explicitly acknowledges that they presuppose what he calls value subjectivism. As we shall see below, Kagan offers other examples that do not presuppose this view.

⁹⁰ Cf. Brandt's theory of intrinsic value, briefly considered in 3.3.

So let us recast Korsgaard's example along the following lines: An example of an extrinsic final value would be something that was good as an end because of the interest that an ideal observer took, or would take, in it, for its own sake; or because of the desire that an ideal observer had, or would have, for it, for its own sake. But even in its recast shape, the example is not compelling. The reason is that it is subject to a *Eutyphro* dilemma. This dilemma arises when we ask whether objects are valuable *because of* (actual or hypothetical) attitudes of an ideal observer vis-à-vis that object, or whether objects are valuable *because of* the properties on account of which the ideal observer takes up (would take up) the relevant attitudes vis-à-vis the objects in question. If the idea is that an ideal observer is ideal by virtue of her ability to detect value-making properties, the latter view seems preferable, for it is not easy to see how an ideal observer (or an actually existing person for that matter) could intelligibly desire or like something on account of the fact that she desires or likes it.

But if we opt for this response to the *Eutyphro* dilemma, Korsgaard's example ceases to be a counterexample to intrinsicism. The view that for an object to be finally valuable is for that object to be such that it is (or would be) desired or liked for its own sake by an ideal observer is fully compatible with the view that all final values are intrinsic values, for such a theory might simply concur with intrinsicism in holding that an object can be desired or liked for its own sake only on account of its intrinsic properties. Differently put, such a theory might hold that all final values supervene exclusively on features intrinsic to that which has them.

We should conclude, then, that Korsgaard's type of examples is not compelling. The reason is twofold: In its original formulation, her example presupposes an implausible form of axiological opportunism. In its recast version, the example gives rise to a *Eutyphro* dilemma. On what seems to be the preferable response to that dilemma, the example ceases to be an instance of extrinsic final value.⁹¹

Kagan, O'Neill, and Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen have offered more compelling examples. These are mainly variations on the theme that a thing may be finally valuable on account of some of its relational,⁹² i.e., non-intrinsic, features, such as uniqueness. Kagan suggests that a stamp might be finally valuable partly on account of its rarity, and that a certain pen might be finally valuable on account of its causal history; the pen used by Abraham

⁹¹ According to Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, pp. 36-9, Korsgaard fails to distinguish between the constitutive grounds and the supervenience base of value; the former may well be extrinsic to a finally valuable object, without thereby rendering its final value intrinsic. The final value of an object is non-intrinsic if and only if its value supervenes on non-intrinsic features. See also Rabinowicz and Österberg 1996.

⁹² Note that a relational property need not be non-intrinsic. As Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen point out, an object may possess "'internally relational' properties [...] in virtue of the relations it has to its own *parts*[" (2000, p. 34). So for instance, it is an internally relational property of me that my right leg is longer than my right arm.

Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves, might have such value.⁹³ O'Neill argues that a wilderness might be valuable for its own sake on account of its being untouched by human hands,⁹⁴ and Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen suggest that a dress might be valuable for its own sake on account of its having belonged to Princess Diana.⁹⁵

In all of these examples, the putative final values supervene on features non-intrinsic to the valuable objects; rarity is clearly not an intrinsic property of the stamp, and being untouched by human hands is clearly not an intrinsic property of the wilderness. Similarly, having been used by Abraham Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, and having been owned by Princess Diana are clearly not intrinsic properties of the pen and the dress, respectively.

However, the last two examples might strike one as less convincing than the first two: Is it really plausible to maintain that the pen used by Abraham Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation might be *finally* valuable? Isn't this just an instance of the confusion between value as means and value as ends that Moore warned against? Lincoln's pen was a means used in a process that resulted in the abandonment of slavery. Isn't it more likely, then, that the pen is *instrumentally* valuable, if indeed it is valuable at all? And similarly, is it really plausible that a dress might be *finally* valuable on account of its having belonged to Diana? Isn't this once again simply to conflate value as means with value as ends? We might idolise Diana, and the dress might consequently possess a significant *instrumental* value in that it reminds us of Diana and enables us to visualise her.⁹⁶

I believe that both these objections can be satisfactorily answered. In Kagan's example, it is clear that the pen was of significant instrumental value. After all, "it was the actual means by which a great deal of intrinsic good was brought into the world."⁹⁷ But Kagan's point is precisely that it is in virtue of this causal role that the pen itself is finally valuable, i.e., "is something we could reasonably value for its own sake."⁹⁸

In Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen's scenario it might be true that we idolise Diana, and our idolisation might be a plausible causal explanation of why we might value the dress for its own sake on account of its having belonged to Diana.⁹⁹ But even if this is the correct causal explanation of our valuing the dress, it does not imply that we value the dress purely instrumentally rather than for its own sake. Neither does it imply that we cannot reasonably value it for its own sake.

⁹³ Kagan, 1998, p. 285.

⁹⁴ O'Neill 1992, p. 125.

⁹⁵ Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, p. 41.

⁹⁶ Cf. Persson 2001, p. 46.

⁹⁷ Kagan 1998, p. 285.

⁹⁸ Kagan 1998, p. 285.

⁹⁹ Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, p. 41; 2001, p. 58.

It might of course be argued on substantive grounds that it is not reasonable to value the dress for its own sake. But that is not the issue here. It must be borne in mind that Kagan's and Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen's examples merely need to serve illustrative purposes. They are designed to establish that the possibility that final value may supervene on features non-intrinsic to its bearer is conceptually and structurally open. Arguably, the claim that a pen is valuable for its own sake because it was used by Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation is perfectly intelligible and coherent, as is the claim that a dress is valuable for its own sake on account of its having belonged to Princess Diana. This is sufficient to establish the possibility of extrinsic final values.

A more serious challenge is this: In their examples of non-intrinsic final values, Kagan, O'Neill, and Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen all appeal to the final values of concrete objects, like stamps, pens, wildernesses, and dresses. But according to a traditional assumption, only propositional entities, i.e., states of affairs or facts, not concrete objects, may possess final value. According to this assumption, the putative final values of the non-propositional concrete objects in the above examples can be reduced to the final values of some states of affairs or facts. In short, we can express this manoeuvre as follows:

The reduction manoeuvre

Only propositional entities can possess final value; the putative final values of non-propositional entities are reducible to the final values of propositional entities

Proponents of the reduction manoeuvre are thus committed to a form of *ontological monism* about value (see the appendix), which says that only states of affairs or facts can be bearers of final value. Once again, this traditional assumption can be traced back to Moore:

One thing, I think, is clear about intrinsic value – goodness in Aristotle's sense – namely that it is only actual occurrences, actual states of things over a certain period of time – not such things as men, or characters, or material things, that can have any intrinsic value at all. (1922b, p. 327)

Several philosophers have followed Moore in assuming that propositional entities are the sole bearers of final value. Among those are the value theorists I have earlier referred to as advocates of the intrinsicist view: Bradley 1998, Chisholm 1986, Feldman 2000, Lemos 1994, Ross 1930, Zimmerman 2001.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ For a somewhat different list, see Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, p. 44.

This connects the issue of value typology to that of value bearers: If the reduction manoeuvre goes through, it may seem that all final values are intrinsic. I shall discuss this connection in the following subsection, but for reasons that will emerge, the specific discussion about value bearers will be postponed to 5.2 and essay 3. The upshot of the present discussion will be that the connection between value typology and value bearers has been exaggerated.

4.3 Value Typology and Value Bearers

Consider again the claims that a certain stamp is finally valuable on account of its rarity, and that a certain wilderness is finally valuable on account of its being untouched by human hands. Applied to these examples, the reduction manoeuvre will have the following consequence: What is “really” valuable for its own sake is not the stamp itself, or the wilderness itself, but rather the fact that *this stamp, which is rare, exists*, and the fact that *this wilderness, which is untouched by human hands, exists*. The same goes for the other two examples mentioned in the preceding section; what is really finally valuable is not Lincoln’s pen, or Diana’s dress, but rather the fact that *this pen, which Abraham Lincoln used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, exists*, and the fact that *this dress, which has belonged to Princess Diana, exists*. On this view, what was formerly taken to be non-intrinsic properties of the objects become intrinsic features of the facts. Consequently, if the reduction manoeuvre is successful, it seems that the intrinsicist view that all final values are intrinsic values is vindicated after all.¹⁰¹

In order to secure the thesis that extrinsic final value is a genuine possibility, Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen have offered extensive arguments against the reduction manoeuvre. I shall return to some of their arguments in my discussion of value bearers in 5.2 and in essay 3. In the present context, it is more relevant to scrutinise in more detail why it appears to some philosophers that a successful reduction of the putative final value of concrete objects to the final value of propositional entities would rule out the possibility of non-intrinsic final value, and to assess whether this appearance is deceptive or not.

Shelly Kagan and Ingmar Persson have independently argued that the reduction manoeuvre does *not* rule out the possibility of non-intrinsic final value.¹⁰² As I understand them, their common line of argument goes something like this: Facts are complex entities of the general form $[x, P, t]$, where x signifies a concrete object, P a property instantiated by x , and t the time at which x instantiates P . In the examples above, final value is thought to su-

¹⁰¹ Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, pp. 42ff.

¹⁰² Kagan 1998; Persson 2001, 2002.

pervene on such properties as being rare, being untouched by human hands, having been used by Abraham Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, and having belonged to Princess Diana. These properties are not intrinsic to the concrete objects in question (the stamp, the wilderness, the pen, and the dress, respectively).

But arguably, neither are they intrinsic properties of the facts in question; they are simply not properties of the facts at all, for it is obviously not the facts that are rare or untouched by human hands. Equally obviously, it is not the facts that have been used by Abraham Lincoln, or belonged to Diana. Persson points out that it is an intrinsic property of, e.g., the fact that *this stamp, which is rare, exists*, that it has as an internal constituent the property of being rare (or perhaps the property of being a rare stamp). But as he also points out – rightly I think – it seems odd to hold that value supervenes on the property of having as an internal constituent the property of being rare (or the property of having as an internal constituent the property of being a rare stamp).¹⁰³ This leads Persson to suggest that the final value of a fact is extrinsic if the property instantiated by the object of the fact is non-intrinsic to that object.¹⁰⁴

Kagan reasons his way to a similar conclusion. In his terminology, facts “ascribe” properties to concrete objects.¹⁰⁵ If a fact is valuable for its own sake, it has this value by virtue of ascribing properties to concrete objects. As his examples are intended to show, the ascribed properties need not be intrinsic to the object of the fact. For instance, the fact that *this pen, which was used by Abraham Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, exists* ascribes to the concrete object (the pen) the property of having been used by Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. According to Kagan, this still upsets the dominant philosophical tradition, which, in his interpretation, requires that the properties ascribed by intrinsically valuable facts must be intrinsic to the objects in question.¹⁰⁶

I find the Kagan/Persson view unnecessarily complicated. Firstly, it accepts the reduction manoeuvre that says that the sole bearers of final value (although Kagan does not use this term, but talks rather about value ‘as an end’, or value ‘for its own sake’) are propositional entities. Persson explicitly argues in favour of this manoeuvre, and Kagan is willing to accept it.¹⁰⁷ Secondly, it says that the final value of a fact is intrinsic if the properties as-

¹⁰³ Persson 2001, p. 45. Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2001, p. 56, concur on this point. Note, however, that Zimmerman actually seems to accept such a view, or something close to it. According to Zimmerman, “the final value of states supervenes on an intrinsic property that they have, namely, the property of having a certain constituent property.” (2001b, p. 135). This is why, in Zimmerman’s view, “the traditional talk of ‘intrinsic value’ rather than ‘final value’ is innocuous”(p. 135). Cf. also p. 127.

¹⁰⁴ Persson 2001, p. 45.

¹⁰⁵ Kagan 1998, pp. 294-96.

¹⁰⁶ Kagan 1998, p. 296.

¹⁰⁷ Kagan 1998, p. 293.

cribed by that fact to the object of the fact are intrinsic to the object; if they are not, the final value of the fact is non-intrinsic. But why assume that (the type of) properties ascribed to concrete *objects*, which are at the outset assumed to be incapable of carrying final value, affect the type of final value that accrues to *facts*? It is not only unnecessarily complicated, but counterintuitive to assume that whether the final value of a given fact is intrinsic or extrinsic depends on properties of a concrete object – which in addition is assumed to be incapable of carrying final value – rather than on the actual bearer of the final value, i.e., the fact. Unless, of course, concrete objects, and not only facts, can be bearers of value after all. But as just mentioned, this is a view that Persson rejects,¹⁰⁸ and one that Kagan is prepared to reject.

But be that as it may; there is another possible way of interpreting the general idea that the reduction manoeuvre rules out the possibility of extrinsic final value. Consider again the fact that *this dress, which has belonged to Princess Diana, exists*. The idea might be that the property upon which the final value of this fact supervenes is the property of implying the existence of a dress that has belonged to Diana. As Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen point out, “this property is an internal characteristic of the fact, in the sense that it does not at all depend on the external context in which the fact obtains.”¹⁰⁹

I believe that this is an accurate interpretation of what lies behind the traditional assumption that the reduction manoeuvre rules out the possibility of extrinsic final value.¹¹⁰ This conception of what it is for the value of a fact to be intrinsic also has another advantage: It allows us to treat the values of facts on a par with the values of concrete objects: We have said all along that the final value of a concrete object is extrinsic if and only if its value supervenes on one or more of its non-intrinsic features (such as rarity, being untouched, etc.). We may say in a parallel fashion that the final value of a fact is extrinsic if it supervenes on features non-intrinsic to that fact. What would be an instance of such a feature? Well, one example was mentioned in the above quote from Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen: It is a non-intrinsic property of a fact that it obtains in a certain context (in conjunction with

¹⁰⁸ Persson clearly rejects this view in his 2001, where his main concern is to show that the success of the reduction manoeuvre does not rule out the possibility of non-intrinsic final values. However, in his 2002, there are certain formulations that prompt the suspicion that Persson after all allows that concrete objects may possess final value (see e.g., pp. 25, 27f.), and that claims to the effect that a concrete object is finally valuable are always logically equivalent to claims about the final values of states of affairs or facts (p. 28). But it is of course hard to see in what sense this is a reduction of value. Nevertheless, Persson explicitly concludes in his 2002 that his main concern is still to secure the thesis that it is not necessary for the proponent of non-intrinsic final value to refute the reduction of the putative final value of concrete objects to the final value of states of affairs or facts (p. 29).

¹⁰⁹ Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2001, p. 57.

¹¹⁰ Cf., e.g., Bradley 2002; Chisholm 1986; Lemos 1994.

other facts). Similarly, it is a non-intrinsic feature of a fact that it is used in one of our examples.

This indicates, surprisingly, that a successful reduction manoeuvre might not obviate the possibility of extrinsic final values after all. In other words, the Kagan/Persson view might in the end be vindicated, albeit not on the grounds they advocate. For the final value of a fact might supervene on the context in which it obtains, i.e., on one or more of its non-intrinsic features. It is therefore possible to conjoin acceptance of the reduction manoeuvre with rejection of the intrinsicist view.¹¹¹ To illustrate, the fact that a person leads a philosophically contemplative life might be finally valuable. But the final value of this fact might be significantly reduced, even subverted, if it is a fact that the majority of the people in the community lead miserable lives.¹¹² Advocates of the intrinsicist view might respond that what is really finally valuable in this example is the ‘wider’ fact that a person leads a philosophically contemplative life in a community where the majority of people do not lead miserable lives. But it might be retorted, in turn, that this response yields a theory of final value that is too indiscriminate, in a way I shall explain in 5.3 and in essay 4. I shall there elaborate on some arguments against intrinsicism that do not crucially hinge on the ontological status of value bearers.

4.4 Where This Leaves Us

I can now state some conclusions about the matters discussed in this section. We started with the observation that there is a conceptual distinction to be made between ‘final value’ and ‘intrinsic value’; something has final value if and only if it is valuable for its own sake. Something has intrinsic value if and only if it is valuable in itself, i.e., if and only if its value supervenes exclusively on its intrinsic features. This is fairly uncontroversial.

It is much more controversial whether these notions are extensionally equivalent, i.e., whether all final values are intrinsic values. The traditional intrinsicist view assumes that this is so, but other philosophers have argued for the possibility of extrinsic final value. Some of their examples have been discussed in this chapter. An initial reaction to those examples might be that what is really finally valuable in those cases are propositional entities, i.e., states of affairs or facts, rather than concrete objects. It might appear that if propositional entities are the sole bearers of final value, the possibility of extrinsic final value is ruled out. In the last paragraph of the preceding subsection, however, we reached the conclusion that this appearance is decep-

¹¹¹ See, e.g., Hurka 1998, and essay 4 below.

¹¹² This example is found in Brännmark 2001, p. 226. It is also taken up by Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2001, p. 49, fn. 2 and 3.

tive. Whether we are prepared to allow for extrinsic final value or not is relatively independent of the discussion of the ontological nature of value bearers.¹¹³ In subsection 5.3 I will discuss the distinction between intrinsicism and conditionalism in more detail, and in essay 4 I shall argue in favour of conditionalism as an approach to final value.

Since I shall consequently argue in favour of the view that final value may supervene on features non-intrinsic to its bearers, I shall from now on mostly stick to the term ‘final value,’ rather than ‘intrinsic value’. Since advocates of the traditional intrinsicist view typically concede that value ‘for its own sake’ is the notion of fundamental interest, I do not believe that this makes the terminology biased against that tradition or against intrinsicism. When the context so requires, however, e.g., in order to continue to forestall confusion that may be caused by terminological deviations from the authors discussed, I shall occasionally speak of ‘intrinsic value.’

It deserves to be pointed out again that those who argue in favour of non-intrinsic final value hold that intrinsic value is a subcategory of the wider category of final value; all intrinsic values are final, but not all final values are intrinsic. In this section, I have not discussed the reversed possibility, i.e., non-final intrinsic values.¹¹⁴ I shall return to this possibility in 5.2 below.

¹¹³ But only relatively so. I presume that one will be more inclined to deny intrinsicism than to accept it if one agrees with Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen that concrete objects might well be bearers of final value.

¹¹⁴ Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, p. 34, fn. 3, refers to Moore 1912 as the only instance they know of where the view that all intrinsic values are final values is questioned. But as will be noted in 5.2 below, Moore was not the only prominent value theorist of the early 20th century who recognised this distinction.

5. Backgrounds to the Essays

Each of the six essays that follow is entirely free-standing, and should be read as such. The order of appearance is somewhat arbitrary, but not completely so. The essays can be thematically split up into four categories: Essays 1 and 2 deal with specific issues concerning certain formats of value analyses; essay 3 discusses the ontological nature of value bearers; essay 4 assesses intrinsicism and conditionalism about final value. Finally, in essays 5 and 6, I discuss some implications of the formal axiological discussions to normative theory.

In the subsections that follow below, I provide some brief backgrounds to the debates in these four areas. I also provide concise summaries of each of the essays. Finally, an appendix suggests a taxonomy of the value monism/pluralism contrast.

5.1 Value Analyses

It is controversial whether there can be such a thing as an analysis of final or intrinsic value. In *Principia Ethica*, G.E. Moore famously argued that there cannot; intrinsic value was for the Moore of *Principia* a primitive concept, and any other normative concept was analysable in terms of it. But in his later works, Moore abandoned the latter half of this view. During large parts of the later stages of his career, Moore held that the axiological concept of ‘intrinsic value’, and the central deontic concepts, such as ‘ought’, ‘duty’, ‘obligation’, etc, are not analysable in terms of one another.¹¹⁵

Against Moore’s views, T.M. Scanlon has recently argued that value is analysable in terms of reasons. According to this view, for a thing to be valuable is not for that thing to possess a simple and unanalysable property, but rather to have other properties that provide reasons to take up attitudes in favour of it, or against it, or to act in certain ways in regard to it.¹¹⁶ Scanlon calls this view the ‘buck-passing account of value’.

¹¹⁵However, as mentioned in 2.1 above, Moore did at one point consider it a possibility “that the true state of the case is rather that ‘right’ is an unanalysable notion, and [‘intrinsic goodness’] an analysable one, containing ‘right’ as an element.” (1993, p. 5)

¹¹⁶Scanlon 1998, pp. 95-100.

As I show in essays 1 and 5, the buck-passing account bears a close resemblance to a view suggested by A.C. Ewing in 1939 and 1947.¹¹⁷ In these works, Ewing held that for a thing to be valuable is for that thing to have properties such that it ought to be the object of pro- or anti-attitudes. Ewing got even closer to an anticipation of the buck-passing account in a later work from 1959, where he suggested an analysis according to which for a thing to be valuable is for that thing to have properties that provide reasons to respond to it in certain ways, where ‘responses’ can be manifested in actions as well as in attitudes.

The buck-passing account is not without merits. Firstly, it is non-committal on the meta-ethical controversies between realists and anti-realists and cognitivists and non-cognitivists; the normative concept appealed to in the buck-passing analysis can equally well be cast within either of these frameworks. This makes the buck-passing account fit well with my approach to formal axiology, as outlined in section 1. Secondly, compared to views à la the later Moore, according to which axiological and deontic concepts are both unanalysable, the buck-passing account is appealingly economical since it analyses axiological concepts (such as ‘value’ or ‘goodness’) in terms of deontic concepts (such as ‘reasons’ or ‘ought’), to the effect that what was formerly taken to be two separate normative categories are reduced to a single one. Thirdly, by analysing value in terms of reasons for responses, the buck-passing account readily establishes and explains the intimate tie often thought to hold between values and reasons for attitudes and actions.

However, the merits of the buck-passing account should not be exaggerated. This is a good place to comment on some of its limits. It is sometimes said, with a hint to J.L. Mackie’s famous ‘queerness’-argument, that the buck-passing account “demystifies” value.¹¹⁸ I believe that this is to place too much confidence in the attainments of the buck-passing account. Since it sets out to analyse value in terms of reasons to respond, it can, as just noted, be claimed with some justification that the buck-passing account demystifies value concepts in so far as it readily establishes their normative ‘compellingness’.¹¹⁹ But one of the reasons why Mackie found objective values queer was precisely this alleged property of being “intrinsically prescriptive”.¹²⁰ A Mackiean error theorist would presumably not be more convinced about the reality of objective values, were she to be told that the putative objective

¹¹⁷ The affinities between Scanlon and Ewing’s 1947 are also highlighted in Dancy 2000, and in Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen 2004.

¹¹⁸ Traces of this view appear in Stratton-Lake 2002, pp. 12f., and in Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen 2004, p. 391.

¹¹⁹ Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen 2004, p. 391.

¹²⁰ Mackie 1977, p. 40.

values do not *have* this queer property, rather they *are* nothing over and above this very property.¹²¹

But in any case, this is all as it should be. After all, the argument from queerness is designed to deny the factual existence of objective values. It thus operates on a different level than does the buck-passing account. As I said in the above paragraph, the buck-passing account *per se* analyses axiological concepts in terms of some other normative and psychological notions, and as such it has the merit of being non-committal with respect to the realist/anti-realist and cognitivist/non-cognitivist controversies. It is thus possible even for an error theorist to accept this analysis of value, and then go on to declare objective values to be projected fictions.

In essay 1, I raise further doubts not about the viability of the buck-passing account, but about its alleged superiority over some of its rival accounts. It has become customary to introduce the buck-passing account in contrast to Moore's views (indeed, I engage in this practice myself in this introduction and in several of the essays). A standard argument against Moore's views and in favour of the buck-passing account is that it is intuitively hard to see how a supervening property of goodness or badness can be reason-giving. Reasons, it is thought, can only be provided by the natural properties on which value supervenes. As Scanlon puts it: "It is not clear what further work could be done by special reason-providing properties of goodness and value, and even less clear how these properties could provide reasons." (1998, p. 97)

Several buck-passers have taken the Moorean views to imply that goodness and value do provide reasons. But according to more plausible interpretations, none of the Moorean views are committed to this. Or so I argue. The concluding section of the essay discusses what can be said for and against the buck-passing account and its Moorean rival approaches. My final verdict is disappointing for those who believe that there is a knock-down argument on either side. No such argument has yet been presented, and I hypothesise that the most effective way of settling the matter might be to appeal to our considered intuitions.

Essay 2 deals with a significant problem for the buck-passing account and any related attempt to analyse value in terms of some other normative concepts such as 'reason' or 'ought'. There seems to be a plethora of cases in which we apparently have reasons to, or ought to, respond to certain objects in certain ways (positively or negatively), although this has no bearing on the (positive or negative) value of those objects. This has become known as the 'wrong kind of reasons' problem. In essay 2, I set out to explain why such reasons are of the wrong kind from the point of view of value analysis, and

¹²¹ According to Ewing, "[w]e are not clearly aware of an indefinable non-natural goodness, but we are of fittingness and obligation." (1947, p. 178) "These are all fictitious notions", Mackie would presumably retort.

to suggest how the buck-passer might deal with the objection. I return to the buck-passing account in 5.4 and in essay 5.

5.2 Value Bearers

Pre-reflectively at least, one might be tempted to view *properties* as the bearers of final value. For instance, Panayot Butchvarov suggests that

[A] person's life can be said to be good on the grounds that it is happy only if happiness itself can be said to be good, and in general, a concrete entity can be said to be good only on the grounds that it has some other property or properties that themselves have the property of being good. (1989, p. 14)

In response to this intuitive view, Noah Lemos has argued that it is not “the property of being happy, as distinguished from the particular happy life, [that] is itself good” (1994, p. 22). According to Lemos, it is rather the fact that someone is happy, or the fact that happy people exist, that should be seen as the proper bearer of final value. Lemos handles the values of concrete objects and persons along the same lines. He is a proponent of what, in section 4, we labelled ‘the reduction manoeuvre’, i.e., the view that that the putative final values of non-propositional entities, e.g., concrete objects and persons, are reducible to the final values of propositional entities, such as states of affairs or facts, and that such entities are the sole bearers of final value.

Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen have persistently argued that the reduction manoeuvre puts the cart before the horse: If the state of affairs or fact that some concrete object or person exists is valuable for its own sake, it seems in many cases only reasonable to suppose that this is so because the concrete object or the person is valuable in the first place.¹²² According to this view, it is the state of affairs or fact that derives its value from the value of the object – not the other way around.¹²³ Another argument against the view that states of affairs or facts are the sole bearers of final value propounded by Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen is based on the familiar idea that to be valuable is to be a fitting object of positive or negative responses (see subsections 3.1 and 5.1, and essays 1, 2, and 5). The evaluatively relevant responses can be quite heterogeneous, and not all of them can be said to take states of affairs or facts as their objects. For instance, one can prefer or desire that something be the case (a state of affairs or a fact), but one can hardly, say, cherish or respect such entities. The latter types of responses are reserved for concrete objects and persons. The upshot

¹²² See Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, 2001, 2003. See also Rønnow-Rasmussen 2002.

¹²³ For a similar line of argument, see Anderson 1993, pp. 22-26.

of Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen's arguments is that the reduction manoeuvre is untenable and that ontological value *pluralism*, i.e., the view that value bearers can be of diverse ontological kinds, is preferable to its rival monist approach (see the appendix).

In essay 3 I defend a different kind of reduction manoeuvre that starts from the intuition expressed by Butchvarov, i.e., that properties are the ultimate bearers of value. The idea is that properties, conceived of not as universals, but as particularised properties, or *tropes*, are the sole bearers of final value. I call this view 'trope-value reductionism'. This is a form of ontological value monism, and it consequently has the general appeal of theoretical simplicity and neatness common to monistic theories in various branches of philosophy. In addition, trope-value reductionism has the resources to respond to Lemos's as well as Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen's challenges. Or so I argue.

Very briefly, tropes differ from universals in that they do possess spatio-temporal locations; they differ from states of affairs or facts in that they are non-propositional. Recall now that Lemos's criticism of Butchvarov's view was that, on the assumption that a happy life is good, it is not the case that the property of being happy, as distinguished from the particular happy life, is itself good. As I argue in essay 3, this criticism has force only against the view that properties conceived of as universals are the bearers of value, i.e. the view that happiness in general, taken as a universal property or a *type*, is valuable. On the trope account, it is the particular happiness of the particular happy life (the trope) – rather than an abstract property of being happy, as distinguished from the particular happy life – that bears the value.

It is obvious that trope-value reductionism does not put the cart before the horse.¹²⁴ To see this, recall an example from the preceding chapter; a stamp might be valuable because it is rare. It cannot be plausibly maintained that the value of the stamp is somehow ontologically prior to the value of the stamp's rarity (the trope), or that the latter is somehow derivative from the former (it seems rather to be the other way around; I'll get back to this in just a moment).

However, Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen have argued that trope-value reductionism is vulnerable to the objection that not all evaluatively relevant responses can be said to take tropes as their objects. For instance, while one can rejoice in a person's happiness (a trope), other responses, such as admiration or respect, are directed at concrete objects or persons rather than at tropes.

A first thing to note about this argument is that it is not entirely obvious that it is wrong to say that we admire a person's courage (a trope). According to Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, however, this is a mere conven-

¹²⁴ This point is acknowledged in Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2003.

tion of language; what we really express by such locutions is admiration of a courageous *person*.¹²⁵

But even granted that we, *inter alia*, do express admiration of persons in such cases, it might still be seen as an open question what is to be recognised as the proper bearer of final value. In Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen's view, Achilles may have a final value, i.e., be valuable for his own sake, because he is courageous. But it may be doubted whether the value of Achilles in this case really is final. Isn't it rather the case that Achilles is valuable for the sake of his courage (the trope), rather than for his own sake? It might be retorted that this overlooks the possibility that courage is merely a value-making property which although it makes its bearers valuable is not itself a value bearer.

The underlying thoughts here might be that courage is an abstract property, and that value can accrue only to particulars such as Achilles. This is reminiscent of Lemos's response to Butchvarov (see above). But it must be remembered that on trope-value reductionism, properties are (also) particulars.¹²⁶ It sounds odd to maintain that Achilles is valuable because of his courage, and at the same time deny that the particular courage of Achilles is valuable. It seems more plausible to hold that Achilles (the person) and Achilles's courage (the trope) both possess value, and that the respective values differ in that the former has a derivative status, whereas the latter has a non-derivative status. This, in turn, makes it natural to say that the value of Achilles is non-final, whereas the value of Achilles's courage is final.¹²⁷ Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, however, are prepared to accept the view that final value need not be non-derivative. This is what in the essay I call a 'loose' view of final value. According to the 'strict' view, final value

¹²⁵ Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2003, p. 399, fn. 14.

¹²⁶ Indeed, tropes are sometimes characterised as 'abstract particulars' (see essay 3, section 2). The idea here is, roughly, that tropes are abstract in the sense that they ordinarily appear only in conjunctions with other tropes, and that therefore they can be brought before the mind only by acts of abstraction. However, it could be argued that it is true of everything short of the 'world all' that it cannot be brought before the mind except by acts of abstraction. So 'particularised properties' might be a preferable characterisation of the notion of tropes. (I take these points from Maurin 2002, p. 23).

¹²⁷ Danielsson, Persson, and Zimmerman have all offered somewhat similar responses to Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, although none of them make use of the notion of tropes. According to Danielsson, "[t]he value [of a certain dress] is supposed to supervene on the property of having been owned by princess Diana, and is it not to make a valuation if we assume that this property is a good-making one? If it is, the value of the dress is derived from the value of the property. [...] The dress [...] [is not] valuable for its own sake. Being once owned by Diana is [by contrast], as the case is presented, an underived value[.]" (2001, pp. 101f.). According to Persson, "if *a*, or *a*'s existence, has value because *a* is E, it is not really the entire *a*, or the existence of the entire *a*, that has value; it is only the herein included exemplification of E that has value, a value from which the value of [*a*] is derivative." (2002, p. 21 [my translation], cf. p. 25; 2001, pp. 38f., 46). According to Zimmerman, "[i]f John is worth admiring, it is not for his own sake; if Diana's dress is worth treasuring, it is not for its own sake. In both cases the valuableness of the object is derivative from the valuableness of the relevant state." (2001b, pp. 132f., cf. pp. 130f.; 2001a, p. 39).

must be non-derivative. I suggest in essay 3 that the strict view accounts for the very *finality* of final value in the way just outlined. The loose view, by contrast, fails to do so.¹²⁸

The idea that tropes are the sole bearers of final value opens up for interesting possibilities in the value typological discussion. It enables us to make sense of the notion of non-final intrinsic values. This might be the type of value that accrues to a concrete object or person in virtue of one or more of its finally valuable intrinsic properties (tropes).¹²⁹ This raises the question of how to classify the type of value that accrues to concrete objects and persons in virtue of their non-intrinsic properties, such as the value of a rare stamp, or the value of a dress that belonged to Princess Diana. According to trope-value reductionism, such value cannot be final. Neither is it intrinsic, and, by hypothesis, it is not instrumental. For lack of better terms, I propose that we call the type of non-instrumental value that may accrue to concrete objects and persons *semi-final* value, and allow that such value can be either intrinsic or non-intrinsic.

5.3 Organic Unities, Intrinsicism, Conditionalism

In section 4, we concluded that the question whether all final values are intrinsic values, and hence whether the terms ‘final value’ and ‘intrinsic value’ are equivalent in extension, is not crucially dependent on the ontological

¹²⁸ The idea is that tropes possess final value in that their value is not derived from the value of anything else. This may or may not lead to the view that final value does not supervene. One possibility is that the final value of a trope, *F*, e.g., Achilles’s courage, does not supervene (cf. Persson 2001, pp. 25f.). But it may be more advisable to say that the final value of any *F* supervenes on *F* itself. The final value of a trope such as Achilles’s courage would then supervene on being Achilles’s courage (cf. Danielsson 2001, p. 97). This is in line with the general thesis that all values are supervenient. It seems less problematic for a trope-value reductionist to preserve another leading intuition behind the supervenience thesis, namely that differences in evaluative respects without differences in non-evaluative respects are impossible. The trope-value reductionist can maintain that if a trope, *F*, is finally valuable, it must be the case that any exactly similar trope, *F*’, is finally valuable to the same degree. On the view I prefer, the final value of a trope may be contextually conditional, i.e., supervenient on features external to it. This is to say that the value of a trope, *F*, supervenes partly on *F*’s having the compresence relations that it has (i.e., on *F*’s appearing in the context it does appear in), call them *C*. Does this make the value of *F* derivative and hence non-final? I believe that the answer is no, because I cannot see in what sense the value would be derivative, other than, innocuously, from being *F* with compresence relations *C*. This is just to say that the final value of *F* with compresence relations *C* supervenes on itself (see the previous footnote). In contrast, if a concrete object, *a*, is valuable because it has among its constituents a trope *F* with compresence relations *C*, it does for the reason given above seem that the value of *a* is derivative from the final value of *F* with compresence relations *C*.

¹²⁹ As Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen note, the possibility of non-intrinsic final value is highlighted in Moore 1912. However, they take this to be a “special Moorean use of the notion of ‘value for its own sake’ [or ‘final value’]”. It should be noted, however, that this possibility was entertained not only by Moore, but also by other prominent value theorists of the first half of the 20th century, such as Ross 1930, and Ewing 1947.

nature of value bearers, i.e., on whether it is states of affairs, facts, concrete objects, persons, properties, or something else that bear final value. To settle the debate on whether all final values are intrinsic we need to find independent arguments for or against the view that final value cannot vary according to context.

Recall from section 4 that *intrinsicism* is the view that final value supervenes exclusively on features intrinsic to its bearer. On this view, all final values are intrinsic values. It follows that final value cannot vary according to context. *Conditionalism* is the opposite view; it allows that final value may supervene on features non-intrinsic to its bearer, and consequently that final value may vary according to context.

It may seem that intrinsicism is necessarily hostile to holistic approaches to value. This is not so, however. Intrinsicism may be coupled with the view that the combination of parts making up a whole may have organic effects on the value of the whole. This is the basic idea of Moore's doctrine of 'organic unities'. Moore himself summed up the idea in the well-known dictum that "the value of a whole must not be assumed to be the same as the sum of the values of its parts".¹³⁰

The doctrine of organic unities is not at all hostile to the intrinsicist view that final value supervenes exclusively on features intrinsic to its bearer; rather, it is based on that idea. So intrinsicists can accommodate one variant of holism about value by appealing to organic unities. Conditionalism, however, allows for a more radical holism. Whereas the intrinsicist advocate of organic unities holds that final value cannot vary according to context, and consequently locates any value that results from the combination of two or more parts in the resulting whole, the conditionalist allows that final value may vary according to context. The conditionalist may consequently locate any value that results from the combination of two or more parts in one or more parts of the resulting whole.

The core issue between intrinsicism and conditionalism, then, concerns the proper location of final value.¹³¹ The main line of argument in essay 4 is that there are intuitive grounds to believe that intrinsicism in many cases mislocates final value. I presuppose a close link between values and responses, that says roughly that to be valuable is to be a fitting object of positive or negative responses.¹³² This suggests another way of putting the charge of mislocation, namely that intrinsicism is too indiscriminate when it comes to identifying fitting objects of such responses. In essay 4, I illustrate this mainly by appealing to the final value of pleasure and pain.

¹³⁰ Moore 1903, p. 28.

¹³¹ Cf. Hurka 1998, Brännmark 2004.

¹³² This is not to say that I presuppose that 'being valuable' is analysable in terms of 'being a fitting object of positive or negative responses', or that the former is analysable in terms of the latter.

I now tend to think that a more illustrative case in point is one to which I give less attention in the essay, *viz.* retributive punishment. This was one of Moore's own favourite examples of an organic unity.¹³³ The basic idea is that cases of retributive punishment involve at least two distinct components; the crime committed, and the pain suffered by the villain. According to the intrinsicist, both components possess negative final value. However, retributive punishment has a positive final value that arises from the organic effects of the combination of the two components.¹³⁴ The intrinsicist locates this value in the resulting whole; it is consequently this whole that is to be seen as a fitting object of a positive, e.g., welcoming, response.

From the conditionalist's perspective, this is to mislocate the final value of retributive punishment; the proper location of the final value is rather the component that consists in the villain suffering pain. Given its present context, there is nothing evaluatively bad about such pain.¹³⁵ This indicates that the intrinsicist idea that the whole constituted by the crime and the villain's pain is a fitting object of a positive response is too indiscriminate. After all, why should we welcome a whole that contains the committing of a crime as an essential component? Isn't it rather the case that the crime is a fitting object of a negative response of, e.g., condemnation, while it is the pain suffered by the villain that, given its present context, is a fitting object of a welcoming response?

The intrinsicist advocate of organic unities also has to face a difficulty that goes beyond the problems of location and indiscrimination. This difficulty can be brought out by focussing on a case of malicious pleasure. I assume for the sake of argument that the intrinsicist and the conditionalist agree that (1) *John's being pleased* has positive final value, and that they also agree that (2) *John's being pleased at Mary's pain* has negative final value. The intrinsicist must, qua intrinsicist, maintain that *John's being pleased* has the same final value in (2) as in (1). Qua advocate of organic unities, he can appeal to organic effects of pleasure taken in another's pain and maintain that pleasure taken in another's pain is negatively valuable as a whole. But this commits him to the idea that the pleasure in a whole such as (2) is a fitting object of a positive response in so far as it is an experience of pleasure, but that the very same pleasure makes the whole of which it is a part a fitting object of a negative response in so far as it is pleasure taken in another's pain. This, I claim, evokes symptoms of evaluative schizophrenia

¹³³ See Moore 1903, pp. 214-16.

¹³⁴ Note, however, that while Moore holds that retributive punishment may be good *as a whole*, it is never good *on the whole*.

¹³⁵ This is not to deny that the experience of pain is *phenomenologically* bad, i.e., that it *feels* bad for the villain being punished (indeed, this is at least part of the point of retributive punishment). See essay 4, section 4.1.

in the evaluator.¹³⁶ A better option is the conditionalist view that there is nothing positively valuable about pleasure taken in another's pain, and that such pleasures are consequently fitting objects of responses of a uniform negative kind.¹³⁷

In addition, essay 4 suggests that considerations of theoretical economy speak in favour of conditionalism, and that some challenges that have recently been raised against conditionalism can be successfully met. An appendix to the essay surveys some implications of conditionalism for substantive views about value (see also essay 6).

5.4 Formal Axiology and Normative Theory

I stated in section 1 that the formal axiological discussion should, as far as possible, remain non-committal on substantive normative issues; ideally, formal theories of value should lack controversial implications for the debates in normative ethics. If controversial normative issues are settled at the level of analysis, this might be thought to reflect a deficiency in the analysis. In essay 5, I take issue with the charge that the buck-passing account of value is subject to such an objection. It has been suggested that the buck-passing account threatens to resolve prematurely the debate between consequentialists and deontologists in favour of the former. But as I show, the way in which the buck-passing account might be biased in favour of consequentialism appears rather harmless. The problem is rather that passing the buck threatens to dissolve the very grounds on which to draw the traditional consequentialism/deontology distinction. But since formal accounts of value should strive to leave everything in the normative debate as it is, the threat of dissolving the grounds on which the consequentialism/deontology debate rests is almost as worrying as the threat of prematurely resolving the very

¹³⁶ Some versions of intrinsicism reject the doctrine of organic unities and strive to import all features whose presence or absence may positively or negatively affect the value of, e.g., pleasure or pain, into complex wholes in which final value is supposed to be located (see, e.g., Zimmerman 2001, ch. 5). The argument from evaluative schizophrenia is not applicable to such versions. Indeed, the difference between conditionalism and such versions of intrinsicism may seem negligible. But I am inclined to believe that conditionalism is intuitively preferable. Intrinsicist attempts to import all features whose presence or absence may positively or negatively affect the value of, e.g., pleasure and pain may well result in theories according to which value bearers are highly complex. I believe that this procedure will in many cases fail to bring out the, as it were, 'core valuable feature', which in many cases need not be anything more complex than experiences of pleasure or pain. In a similar vein, it is doubtful whether fitting objects of evaluatively relevant positive or negative responses really have to be anything as complex as, e.g., experiences of pleasure or pain along with whatever features may positively or negatively affect their value. So even these versions of intrinsicism might be seen as too indiscriminate; conditionalism allows for finer discriminations in the identification of fitting objects of evaluative responses, as it distinguishes between the proper bearer of the value and features that may spoil or enhance its value. See essay 4, fn. 26.

¹³⁷ Cf. Brännmark 2001, p. 227; Stratton-Lake 2002b, pp. 126-28.

debate in favour of one side over the other. From the buck-passer's perspective, it is desirable to avoid both of these upshots. I discuss a number of ways in which buck-passers can do so.

The main conclusion of the essay is that the buck-passing account does reduce the conceptual space for the consequentialism/deontology distinction, but that the ways in which it does so are tolerable. Even if the buck-passing account is accepted, there remain a number of useful distinctions between normative theories, some of which capture important aspects of what intuitively divides consequentialists and deontologists.

In essay 6 (co-authored with Frans Svensson), some consequences of a conditionalist approach to final value is discussed. Conditionalism does not entail, but is congenial to *particularism* about value (I argue this point already in the appendix to essay 4, where I take it to be an advantage of conditionalism that it sits much better with particularism than does intrinsicism). Essay 6 argues that this has an interesting implication for normative theory, namely that moral particularism need not conflict with consequentialism. It is a common line of thought that particularism conflicts with 'principle- or rule-based' normative theories, such as consequentialism. But given a particularistic approach to (final) value, the conflict evaporates. The essay offers a general characterisation of particularism, and it is suggested that particularists' aversions to consequentialism stem not from structural features of consequentialism *per se*, but from substantive and structural axiological views traditionally associated with – but not necessarily linked to – consequentialism.

Appendix

The Value Monism/Pluralism Contrast: A Taxonomy

It is common practice to contrast monism and pluralism in philosophical debates about value. It is less common, however, to explicitly point out that this contrast amounts to quite different things in various value theoretical contexts. There are at least three different senses in which the value monism/pluralism contrast may be employed. We may call these *substantive* value monism/pluralism; *ontological* value monism/pluralism; and *response* value monism/pluralism. The first monism/pluralism distinction belongs to substantive axiology, while the other two belong to formal axiology. They might be further elaborated as follows:

Substantive Value Monism/Pluralism

This is the contrast between theories that hold that only one kind of ‘thing’ is finally valuable and theories that hold that more than one kind of ‘thing’ is finally valuable (see essay 4, appendix). A prime example of the former is *axiological hedonism*, i.e., the view that only pleasure (pain) has positive (negative) final value. Another example is *axiological preferentialism*, i.e., the view that only preference satisfaction (frustration) has positive (negative) final value. Axiological hedonism and axiological preferentialism are thus versions of substantive value monism. Prime example of substantive value pluralism are *objective list theories*, which typically hold that a plethora of ‘things’, such as pleasure, friendship, knowledge, beauty, equality, achievement, and what have you, all carry final value.

Ontological Value Monism/Pluralism

This is the contrast between theories that hold that final value accrues only to one type of ontological entities and theories that hold that final value may accrue to more than one type of ontological entities. A prime example of the former is the view that propositional entities are the sole bearers of final value (see 4.3 above). Another example is trope-value reductionism that I defend in 5.2 above, and in essay 3. An example of ontological value pluralism is the view defended by Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000,

2003, according to which a variety of ontological entities may possess final value (see 4.3, 4.4, 5.2 above, and essay 3, for discussions).

Response Value Monism/Pluralism

This is the contrast between theories that hold that there is only one adequate type of response to value and theories that hold that there is more than one such type of adequate response. An example of the former is the view that values call for a uniform response of promotion (see essay 5). Another example is the view that value calls for a uniform response of favouring, or at least that all adequate responses to value share a uniform element of favouring.¹³⁸ In contrast, response value pluralisms hold that values may call for a variety of distinct responses.¹³⁹

An interesting thing to note is that these three levels of value monism/pluralism seem largely logically independent. Endorsement of monism (pluralism) does not seem to necessarily commit one to monism (pluralism) at any of the other levels.

In this thesis, I remain non-committal on the substantive value monism/pluralism debate. For argumentative purposes, however, I occasionally presuppose substantive value pluralism (I take it that this position makes more intuitive sense than substantive value monism). In 5.2 and in essay 3, I explicitly argue in favour of ontological value monism. Finally, throughout the thesis I presuppose response value pluralism (I give some tentative arguments for this view in essays 1, 4, and 5). Consequently, I combine endorsement of ontological value monism with endorsement of substantive value pluralism and of response value pluralism. To mention two other possibilities: Michael Zimmerman 2001 combines endorsement of substantive value pluralism (ch. 6) with ontological value monism (ch. 3) and response value monism (ch. 4); Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen endorse pluralism at all three stages.

The important point to keep in mind is that the monism/pluralism contrast can be used in different senses in the value theoretical debate, and that none of these senses seem necessarily connected to any of the others.

¹³⁸ Zimmerman 2001, ch. 5

¹³⁹ For various versions of response value pluralism, see Ewing 1947, Anderson 1993, Scanlon 1998, Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, 2001, 2003.

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