

# A Defense of Two Optimistic Claims in Ethical Theory

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Abstract: I aim to show that (i) there are good ways to argue about what has intrinsic value; and (ii) good ethical arguments needn't make ethical assumptions. I support (i) and (ii) by rebutting direct attacks, by discussing nine plausible ways to argue about intrinsic value, and by arguing for pain's intrinsic badness without making ethical assumptions. If (i) and (ii) are correct, then ethical theory has more resources than many philosophers have thought: empirical evidence, and evidence bearing on intrinsic value. With more resources, we can hope to base all of our moral beliefs on evidence rather than on, say, emotion or mere intuition.

Philosophical disputes often endure despite centuries of debate. For this reason, some worry that our debates are ill-conceived. I want to address a less commonly expressed, but perhaps better-founded, worry: that our arguments must underdetermine how we solve the great philosophical problems, and so many of our cherished beliefs must arise from emotion and temperament, not from the rational assessment of evidence. In this essay I want to chip away at this concern, as it applies to ethical theory.

Let's define two extreme views. Pure optimists believe that the evidence we can gather would support the true or correct ethical theory against all others. Pure optimists believe that arguments can guide our choice among nihilism, egoism, utilitarianism, Kantianism, contractualism, Rossian pluralism, and so on. Pure optimists need not believe in a simple, fully general moral theory; the correct view may be disjunctive, indeterminate, relativistic or particularist. But according to pure optimists, a fully rational person would adopt the correct moral view, down to the last detail, upon examining the evidence.

Pure pessimists believe that, ultimately, our evidence must remain neutral among scores of diverse, competing moral views. Pure pessimists believe that intelligently conducted value disputes must end in a clash of equally justified, or equally unjustified, beliefs. On their view, our evidence must radically underdetermine our choice among the various normative ethical theories.

Note that optimists and pessimists needn't disagree on whether we can reach consensus; their dispute is about the strength of the possible evidence, not its power to persuade. Pure optimists may think that most people are too thick-headed to draw the right conclusions from the best arguments; pure pessimists may predict convergence despite the existence of epistemically viable alternatives.

Most philosophers occupy the wide ground between pure optimism and pure pessimism. We have reason for greater optimism if ethical theory has more, rather than fewer, argumentative resources. I will defend two optimistic claims:

- (1) There are good ways to argue about what has intrinsic value.
- (2) There are good ethical arguments that lack ethical assumptions.

These claims are widely disputed. As we shall see, critics of (1) include Hume, Mill, James, Moore, Beardsley, Narveson, Smart, Chisholm, Bond, and Bernstein; (2) has been denied by Beardsley, McDowell, Dworkin and Lockwood. If (1) and (2) are true, then ethics has more argumentative resources: nonmoral evidence, and evidence that bears on what has intrinsic value.<sup>i</sup>

Here is the outline of the essay. In Section 1, I characterize intrinsic value and criticize arguments against (1). In Section 2, I support (1) by discussing nine types of argument that may bear on what has intrinsic value. In Section 3, I criticize arguments against (2). In Section 4, I defend a traditional argument for pain's intrinsic disvalue which presupposes nothing ethical, thus confirming (1) and (2). (1) and (2), I conclude, are true. This is good news for optimists.

### 1. Pessimism About Intrinsic Value

Intrinsic value is an intrinsic property of whatever has it (or at least it supervenes on intrinsic properties). “The intrinsic properties of something,” David Lewis says, “depend only on that thing; whereas the extrinsic properties of something may depend, wholly or partly, on something else. If something has an intrinsic property, then so does any perfect duplicate of that thing; whereas duplicates situated in different surroundings will differ in their extrinsic properties.”<sup>ii</sup> An item's intrinsic value, therefore, depends only on that thing. Perfect duplicates cannot differ in intrinsic value. Intrinsically good things are good independently of all else, good per se, good in themselves.<sup>iii</sup>

By ‘intrinsic value’ I’ll mean just what can be gleaned from ‘intrinsic’ and ‘value.’ Thus, I define ‘intrinsically valuable’ as “valuable in itself.” Feldman calls this definition “seriously incomplete”<sup>iv</sup> since it doesn’t distinguish intrinsic value from, say, logical value (the intrinsic goodness of a valid argument) or aesthetic value (where the value is internal to the object).<sup>v</sup> Feldman asks, “what is distinctive about the distinctively ethical sort of intrinsic goodness?”<sup>vi</sup> Intrinsic goodness necessarily relates to action: if something has

intrinsic value, then it is possible for someone to have a normative reason to create or sustain it just in order to do so. It is contradictory to say, “It has intrinsic value, but no one could have a reason to bring it about or keep it going.” Is this true of logical and aesthetic value? Is it incoherent to say, “The painting is of high intrinsic quality, but no one could have a reason to create or sustain it just in order to do so?” If it is, then intrinsic aesthetic value is a type of intrinsic value, and what’s distinctive about intrinsic value is just its generality; if it isn’t incoherent, then intrinsic value is distinctive in both its generality and its relation to action.

Notice that this definition of ‘intrinsic value’ doesn’t rule out the possibility of actions being intrinsically good. Saving a life, for example, might be intrinsically valuable. Nor does it entail that intrinsic goods provide equally strong reasons for all. Egoists believe that my welfare has intrinsic value, since they believe that my welfare is good in itself, if only good-to-me or giving only me basic reasons. Finally, note that an intrinsically good item, on this definition, might be good contingently, since it might have lacked those features that account for its intrinsic value.

‘Intrinsic value,’ as defined, is a broad category, but it doesn’t include all values. Consider, for example, instrumental and contributive goods. Instrumental goods produce valuable results but needn’t be good in themselves. Contributive goods need more explanation. Contributive goods are defined by their relation to organic wholes. An organic whole is an intrinsically good item whose value differs from the summed value of its parts,<sup>vii</sup> where parts may not overlap, and together they constitute the whole. A part has contributive value if its union with the rest of the whole results in a synergy of intrinsic value. More precisely, a part has contributive value if the organic whole would have less intrinsic value

without it, by an amount exceeding the part's intrinsic worth. Moore, for example, believes that a beautiful object contributes value to the organic whole consisting of that object plus the pleasurable contemplation of it.<sup>viii</sup> Consistent with this is the claim that the beautiful object—which has contributive value—has no intrinsic value.

Kagan thinks this notion of intrinsic value is of no interest to value theory. “So what, then, is especially interesting about value based on intrinsic properties alone? Is there anything at all that makes it especially worthy of study?”<sup>ix</sup> Intrinsic value is of special interest for two reasons. First, it's basic, in the sense that something's intrinsic value does not derive from other objects. Second, something with intrinsic value has properties that suffice for the existence of value. Thus, in studying intrinsic value, we study value, not part of value, or part of what could have value, in the right context.

Philosophers are typically pessimistic about the number of ways we can argue that something has, or lacks, intrinsic value. According to Mill, James, Moore, and Narveson, only one method can be used to show that something is intrinsically good,<sup>x</sup> while Smart thinks that ethicists can only “remove confusions and discredit superstitions . . .” and then rely on the reader's benevolent sentiments.<sup>xi</sup> Below we'll encounter other pessimistic assessments.

Why the pessimism? Perhaps the answer to this question would be long. Perhaps, for example, it would involve criticizing every important argument to the conclusion that something has, or lacks, intrinsic value. But in Section 2 I will show how formidable such a task is, by showing the great number and variety of arguments purporting to bear on intrinsic value. And in Section 4 I will defend an argument according to which painful experiences are intrinsically bad. For now, I'll merely argue that the standard rationale for such

pessimism—which can be stated briefly—is unconvincing.<sup>xii</sup> According to that rationale, there are no good ways to argue about what has intrinsic value because intrinsic value is basic.

Intrinsic value is basic in the sense that an object’s intrinsic value doesn’t derive from external objects. Why do the pessimists think this is relevant? Hume thinks it excludes the only way to argue that something has value: namely, by arguing that it leads to, or otherwise depends on, other goods.<sup>xiii</sup> And Beardsley says that “even if something has intrinsic value, we could not know it . . .” because we can give evidence for an item’s value only by considering it “in the wider context of other things, in relation to a segment of a life or of many lives.”<sup>xiv</sup> Bernstein similarly remarks that, “If an item is intrinsically valuable in the sense of being valuable ‘in and of itself’, then, by its very nature, its value cannot be explicated by references to any relationships—let alone any attitudinal relationships—that it may have with persons.”<sup>xv</sup> For this reason, he says that the notion of intrinsic value is “shrouded in obscurity”<sup>xvi</sup> and Bond calls it “highly obscure.”<sup>xvii</sup>

But, first, the notion of intrinsic value should not be called “obscure” for that reason. One might not sympathize with, for example, Nozick’s thesis that highly unified objects have intrinsic value,<sup>xviii</sup> but that thesis is not obscure. One can at least understand the claim that we have reason to create and sustain highly unified objects just for the sake of doing so. Second, Bernstein and Bond do not reject all value-categories. And if anything has value, then, arguably, the universe has some intrinsic value, since the universe includes the valuable thing plus whatever extrinsic conditions secure its value. Third, Bernstein and Bond overlook that an item might consist partly in a person, partly in something else. Such an item’s intrinsic value might be explicated by reference to attitudinal relationships internal to

it. For example, persons desiring objects—those wholes—might have intrinsic value, because the person’s attitude confers value on the object.<sup>xix</sup> Fourth, and most importantly, all these pessimists underestimate our resources for arguing about what has intrinsic value, as I’ll now try to show.

## 2. Arguments For or Against Something’s Having Intrinsic Value

Philosophers have brought at least nine types of argument to bear on whether an item is intrinsically good, bad or neutral. These are positive arguments, not defensive rejoinders, and each has had its champions. I’ll discuss each briefly. All told, they provide rich material for ethical theory.

**Arguing from Intrinsic Properties.** One may argue that an item is intrinsically good, bad or neutral by appealing to intrinsic facts about it. This approach makes sense: to argue that a thing is intrinsically good, why not focus on its intrinsic properties? Arguments for intrinsic goodness might appeal to the fact that a society is peaceful, that a photograph has balanced composition, that a life is satisfied, that a theory is unified, that a friendship is constant, that a brain is complex, and so on. Arguments for intrinsic badness might appeal to the fact that a society is conflicted, that a photograph has unbalanced composition, that a life is frustrated, that a relationship is inconstant, that a junk-heap is in disarray, and so on. Korsgaard thinks that “there is an order within ‘valuable wholes,’ a conditioning of some elements by others . . . This order reflects the reason why the wholes are good.”<sup>xx</sup> Why, she asks, is happiness conjoining a good will intrinsically good, unlike happiness conjoining a

bad will? “[H]appiness in the one case is good because the conditions under which it is fully justified have been met (roughly, because its having been decently pursued makes it deserved). Those internal relations reveal the reasons for our views about what is valuable . . . .”<sup>xxi</sup> This passage makes clear why Korsgaard rightly opposes the idea that “if you can say why something is valuable, that ipso facto shows that the thing is extrinsically valuable.”<sup>xxii</sup>

Philosophers have also argued that items are intrinsically neutral by highlighting their intrinsic properties. Stich, for example, argues in this way about true belief.<sup>xxiii</sup> Sidgwick argues that purely physical processes are intrinsically neutral: “so long as we confine our attention to [the] corporeal aspect [of physical processes],—regarding them merely as complex movements of certain particles of organised matter—it seems impossible to attribute to these movements, considered in themselves, either goodness or badness.”<sup>xxiv</sup> Being a dualist, Sidgwick instead ascribed intrinsic value to pleasurable consciousness.

**Arguing from the Merits of Larger Normative Theories.** One may argue that an item is intrinsically good, bad or neutral by appealing to the merits of larger normative theories which entail that it is. Assessing such theories may involve assessing whether they entail plausible evaluative judgments; are internally consistent; are self-defeating;<sup>xxv</sup> make arbitrary or natural distinctions; have ad hoc principles; motivate their own principles, goals and restrictions;<sup>xxvi</sup> have appropriate breadth; cohere with established empirical facts and scientific theories (such as evolution by natural selection or the rejection of vitalism); and cohere with plausible doctrines having a strong philosophical component (for example, the denial of human free will or atheism).

Do such arguments work? Of course we should reject theories that are incoherent or conflict with independently established results in science or philosophy. The key question is whether doing so would significantly reduce the list of viable candidates for intrinsic value. That question is too difficult to try to answer here. One can of course pare down that list considerably by eliminating theories with implications one finds implausible. But calling an implication “implausible” doesn’t offer evidence against the theory. One might, however, say that one is a competent judge on the matter in question, and so one’s plausibility judgments are probative. I’ll discuss competent judges next.

**Arguing from the Attitudes of Ideal Observers or Competent Judges.** One may argue that an item is intrinsically good, bad or neutral by appealing to how it is viewed by God, an ideal observer,<sup>xxvii</sup> actual competent judges,<sup>xxviii</sup> or simply the vast majority of human beings or sentient animals.

These arguments are widely employed. Millions of people have appealed to God’s authority on moral matters. Brandt has long argued that certain views would be favored by fully factually informed people.<sup>xxix</sup> Mill famously appeals to competent judges in assessing the intrinsic value of pleasures.<sup>xxx</sup> Aristotle tells us that “Eudoxus thought that pleasure was the good because he saw all things, both rational and irrational, aiming at it . . .”<sup>xxxi</sup> Aristotle evidently agrees, for he says, “the fact that all things, both brutes and men, pursue pleasure is an indication of its being somehow the chief good . . .” Mill holds that “the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is [intrinsically] desirable is that people do actually desire it.”<sup>xxxii</sup> William James and Jan Narveson seem to agree.<sup>xxxiii</sup> And according to

Sidgwick, Common Sense gropes toward utilitarianism—which can be construed as an argument for the intrinsic value of happiness.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

How do these strategies fare? Any argument appealing to God’s attitudes, desires or beliefs assumes that God exists—a contestable assumption. So perhaps it would be better to appeal to an admittedly nonexistent God-like being: an ideal observer. Ideal observers are typically characterized as being, to the maximal extent, intelligent, informed, imaginative, sympathetic, logical, rational, free, calm and impartial—or as having some of those traits. Arguments employing ideal observers must characterize the observer, show how that characterization yields the desired attitude, and motivate that characterization without presupposing the correctness of that attitude. Meeting those goals won’t be easy.<sup>xxxv</sup> One problem is that since ideal observers have superhuman traits—maximal sympathy, for example—we can’t look to humans possessing those traits to determine what the ideal observer’s attitudes would be. We could, however, look to competent human judges, who are, under one description, imperfect approximations of ideal observers.

Competent judges might be described as having traits generally conducive to making good ethical judgments. For example, they might be described as intelligent, knowledgeable, and reasonable. Thus characterized, they would be like ideal observers but with their traits possessed non-maximally. Alternatively, their description might be tailored to competence over a particular domain. For instance, a competent judge of two pleasures might be described as someone with a good memory who has experienced both.

Could competent judge arguments possibly work? Imagine the best-case scenario for such an argument. Suppose that everyone who could reasonably be called “competent” over a given domain agrees on a value judgment within that domain. These judges know all the

empirical facts that seem relevant. These judges number in the hundreds and include women and men of various backgrounds, lifestyles and age groups. Would this chorus of opinion support the value judgment in question? It seems like it would; for surely, some of these well-informed people have got it right. This evidence, of course, would be defeasible. For example, we might decide that the universally-held belief arises from a weakness in human nature which is responsible for us having false beliefs in other areas. But the argument would have some force.

Are there value judgments on which everyone, or nearly everyone, who could reasonably be called “competent” would agree? There are. Instances of child abuse and genocide are intrinsically bad, empty space is intrinsically neutral, the innocent pleasures of innocent people are intrinsically good. So, some competent judge arguments may have force. Of course, knowledgeable, sensitive, reasonable people sometimes split more-or-less evenly on whether a particular item has intrinsic value. Competent judge arguments can’t help resolve those disputes.

One might also appeal to common opinion. According to this argument, if everyone (or almost everyone) thinks X has intrinsic value, it probably does. This may sound fallacious, but the inference can be justified in two ways. First, it can be justified by an appeal to competent judges, making it an instance of the previous argument. To make that appeal explicit, consider this expansion of the argument: everyone thinks X has intrinsic value; probably, many of these people are competent to judge whether X has intrinsic value; therefore, the many competent judges agree that X has intrinsic value; so, it probably does. This strategy suggests an opposing argument: everyone thinks X has intrinsic value; probably, many of these people are moral morons; therefore, the many morons agree that X

has intrinsic value; so, it probably doesn't. This opposing argument, however, is weaker than the original, since we can't infer anything about X's value from what morons think. Morons are sometimes right (by accident) and sometimes wrong. Competent judges, on the other hand, are more reliable. Their competence increases the likelihood that their judgments are correct.

Second, the transition from "everyone thinks X has intrinsic value" to "it probably does" can be justified as an inference to the best explanation. Why does everyone think X has value? Because it obviously does! In particular cases, this may be the best explanation of the consensus.

Hence, some arguments from consensus or near-consensus may have force. Like competent judge arguments, they are limited to cases of wide agreement. I won't speculate any further about which cases those are.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

**Arguing from Intuition.** One may argue that an item is intrinsically good, bad or neutral by appealing to moral intuition. The idea of moral intuition is often caricatured, but many fine philosophers have intuitionist inclinations. Ross says that the prima facie rightness of an act of promise-keeping is self-evident "in the sense that when we have reached sufficient mental maturity and have given sufficient attention to the proposition it is evident without any need of proof, or of evidence beyond itself. It is evident just as a mathematical axiom, or the validity of a form of inference, is evident . . ."<sup>xxxvii</sup> Many others hold similar views. C. I. Lewis urges that we have "immediate experiences of good and bad."<sup>xxxviii</sup> More recently, Nagel writes that "[I]n ethics, one infers from appearances of value to their most plausible explanation in a theory of what there is reason to do or

want.”<sup>xxxix</sup> And in Rawls’ most famous book, Hare finds in the space of two pages no fewer than thirty expressions implying a reliance on intuitions.<sup>xl</sup>

What does it mean to say that a proposition is known by intuition?<sup>xli</sup> Very little, according to Bennett: “[Realists] say that they know moral truths by ‘intuition,’ but I cannot find that they mean anything by this except that they do have moral opinions.”<sup>xlii</sup> Yet to say that something is intuitively known is at least to make a negative claim. Intuitive knowledge is not knowledge by description, deduction, induction, outer sense, testimony, inference to the best explanation or divine revelation. Intuitionism is also associated with various positive claims. To make this doctrine strongest, I’ll place this claim at its core: intuitions are beliefs supported by the fact that they arise from the believer’s adequate grasp of their content.<sup>xliii</sup> On this view, my belief that some particular thing has intrinsic value is confirmed if the belief was based on my adequate grasp of what the belief is about.

This positive characterization of intuitionism doesn’t entail that we intuit unanalyzable, non-natural properties. Shorn of that Moorean doctrine, David Lewis is one self-proclaimed intuitionist.<sup>xliv</sup> Nor does it entail that we infallibly discern moral truths with a specialized moral faculty. Intuitionists may agree with Paul Churchland, who observed that, “we do have an organ for understanding and recognizing moral facts. It is called the brain.”<sup>xlv</sup> Finally, this form of intuitionism doesn’t entail that intuitive knowledge is a priori—that is, it doesn’t entail that the justification or epistemization of intuitive knowledge is independent of experience—for experience may be crucial to one’s “adequate grasp” of an intuited belief or proposition.

According to intuitionists, how can we arrive at an “adequate grasp” of propositions of the form, “X has intrinsic value?” One strategy is to perceive X, its instances or

duplicates or near duplicates. Indeed, “intuition” is sometimes used to refer to spontaneous ethical beliefs prompted by observation. By itself, however, this strategy has limited application, as Lewis points out: observation works best with short, dramatic episodes and doesn’t include observing the minds of others.<sup>xlvi</sup> Intuitionists may also tell us to reflect. Lewis advises us to “[t]ry hard to imagine how it would be if the putative value were (or were not) realized.”<sup>xlvii</sup> Audi plumps for “conclusions of reflection,” where the reflection is on an evaluative proposition, not on an argument.<sup>xlviii</sup> We are also told to imagine the item in isolation—as if it were the only thing in the universe—and to perceive it, its instances, and its duplicates or near duplicates in a variety of circumstances. In each case, the aim is to avoid confusing the item’s intrinsic properties with its extrinsic properties. Moore thinks that imagining an item in isolation is “the only method that can be safely used, when we wish to discover what degree of value a thing has in itself.”<sup>xlix</sup>

All these ways to achieve an “adequate grasp” of a proposition are ways to become competent to judge its truth-value. Intuitionism, as I have characterized it, thus generates a species of competent judge arguments. Whatever gives one’s intuitions probative value makes one competent to judge the question at issue.

Intuitive arguments rest on a plausible assumption: that when people think properly about whether an item has intrinsic value, they are likely to produce the right answer. But intuitive arguments face the serious objection that intuitions often conflict. Upon reflection, and upon hiking, some people think that unspoiled nature has intrinsic value, while others do not. We are often confident of our moral intuitions, but the fact that disagreement is widespread means that many of us confidently believe falsehoods.<sup>1</sup> Thus, intuitionists are burdened to explain why we should trust their intuitive beliefs rather than their opponents’.

However, the problem doesn't arise if everyone has the same intuition. Moreover, in such cases one could again argue to the best explanation: everyone agrees because the truth is obvious upon proper reflection. It won't do to reply by saying that moral intuition is generally unreliable, and so even intuitive consensus on a given value can't confirm it. For even if some issues are too hard to be resolved intuitively, others might not be. Consider an analogy: even if looking around is generally unreliable for discovering whether an object is within a hundred miles, looking around can confirm whether there is an elephant in the room.

**Arguing from the Logic of Moral Terms.** One may argue that an item is intrinsically good, bad or neutral by appealing to the logic of moral terms. Quite a few respected ethicists employ this strategy.<sup>li</sup> Gewirth, Hare and Gauthier, for example, believe that substantive ethical conclusions can be derived from the ordinary notions “action,” “ought,” and “rational,” respectively. According to these views, these ordinary notions are “thick” rather than “thin”—that is, they entail substantive ethical doctrines.

Their arguments are complicated, so I won't delve into details, but I will mention a general concern. Even if ordinary moral concepts entail substantive doctrines, concepts that are substantively neutral, or that entail different ethical doctrines, might be preferable. Why should we think that ordinary conceptions are the best? “[D]efinitions,” as Rawls says, “have no special status and stand or fall with the theory itself”<sup>liii</sup>—including the theory which such philosophers think is implicit in ordinary moral-linguistic practice. Nonetheless, appealing to the logic of moral terms remains a possible argumentative resource.

**Arguing from What is Natural or Unnatural.** One may argue that an item is intrinsically good, bad or neutral by arguing that it is natural, unnatural or neither.<sup>liii</sup> But despite its deep roots in Aristotelian ethics and Natural Law Theory,<sup>liv</sup> and despite its continued use in popular culture,<sup>lv</sup> this style of argument is largely out of fashion in secular academic circles, and perhaps rightly so. “The natural” is variously contrasted with the human, the learned, the cultural, the social, and the artificial.<sup>lvi</sup> Hence, any argument using ‘natural’ must specify which meaning is intended. But such arguments seem ineffective however they go. One might say that natural objects, being unsullied by human alteration, are intrinsically good. But if natural objects weren’t created by God, why should this be? Or one might say that behaviors natural to human beings are intrinsically good. But if human nature evolved by natural selection, why should this be? Discussions of what’s natural shed light on moral psychology: on human moral development, on the moral codes of different cultures, on what is realistic to demand of agents, and so on. However, the idea of the natural seems unhelpful for discovering what has intrinsic value.

**Arguing from the Etiology of Belief.** Sometimes philosophers try to discredit beliefs about intrinsic value by showing that they have nonrational causes. Typically, those causes are psychological, sociological, historical or evolutionary. Marx, for example, thinks that economic factors determine moral beliefs, political systems, “ideologies” and the like; Nietzsche attributes the development of “slave morality” to the resentment of the oppressed Jews, and to its utility for them;<sup>lvii</sup> Mill thinks that common-sense morality is influenced by prejudice, superstition, envy, arrogance and self-interest;<sup>lviii</sup> to this list Singer adds obsolete religious, metaphysical and factual views;<sup>lix</sup> Smart says that belief in some basic values may

be due to “conceptual confusion,” “rule worship” or “tradition;”<sup>lx</sup> utilitarians in particular sometimes hold that certain ethical beliefs are due to classical conditioning: one believes that justice or honesty, say, are intrinsically good merely because one has seen them conjoined with utility, which one believes to be (and which is) intrinsically good.<sup>lxi</sup>

What might such etiological accounts show? Very little, Nagel seems to think. Nagel says that “someone who abandons or qualifies his basic method of moral reasoning on historical or anthropological grounds alone is nearly as irrational as someone who abandons a mathematical belief on other than mathematical grounds.”<sup>lxii</sup> It is certainly true that only powerful evidence could rationally compel someone to abandon a belief, that is, to stop believing it with the expectation of never believing it again; and merely etiological accounts cannot provide such powerful evidence. Nevertheless, etiological evidence can count against beliefs about intrinsic value in at least three ways.

First, such accounts might straightforwardly discredit arguments for an item’s being intrinsically good, bad or neutral. If, for example, the belief that an item is intrinsically good is claimed to be self-evident, that claim is undermined by showing that such confidence has a nonrational cause. Or, if a belief is defended on the grounds of its wide or universal appeal, that argument is undermined by showing that such appeal has a nonrational cause.<sup>lxiii</sup>

Second, etiological accounts can help us evaluate arguments in a subtler way. Sher expresses a common view when he says that, “psychological explanations . . . are of interest only after justification has failed.”<sup>lxiv</sup> But psychological explanations can also help us assess whether justifying arguments succeed, for understanding our biases might help us evaluate difficult arguments. We might assess an argument for an item’s being intrinsically good, bad or neutral less favorably if we know that nonrational factors predispose us to accept its

conclusion. Vanity, for example, might dispose us to believe that persons have intrinsic value; and being aware of that might make us less gullible when faced by weak arguments trying to show that persons have such value.

Third, etiological accounts may show that a belief regarding an item's intrinsic value has a source that usually produces false beliefs; therefore, that belief is probably false.<sup>lxv</sup>

One might also try to show that a belief regarding an item's intrinsic value has rational causes and so is probably true. Intuitionists, for example, might try to show that such a belief is caused by an adequate understanding of that belief. But what other causes could count as "rational?" If the cause is the contemplation of an argument, then we would assess that argument, not the derivative argument that the belief was rationally caused. In practice, most etiological arguments try to disparage beliefs about intrinsic value.

**Arguing from Analogy.** One may argue that an item is intrinsically good, bad or neutral by drawing an analogy between that item and some other which is assumed to be intrinsically good, bad or neutral. Such items may have similar features (and therefore, each is good, bad or neutral) or they may have opposing features (such that one is intrinsically good and the other intrinsically bad). For example: dirt has no intrinsic worth; anything physical is like dirt by virtue of being composed of dirt-parts; therefore, probably, nothing physical has intrinsic value. Or: intense pain is intrinsically bad because it feels bad; therefore, probably, intense pleasure is intrinsically good because it feels good. Such arguments are frequently plausible.

**Arguing from Assumed Goods.** One may argue that an item is intrinsically good (or bad) by suggesting that it is the source of other values (or disvalues). On one reading, Aristotle argues in this way about the value of contemplation, and Kant argues in this way about the good will.<sup>lxvi</sup>

One may also argue that some item must exist which is intrinsically good (or bad) since something in the world has value (or disvalue). Audi develops this line of thought, which he attributes to Aristotle.<sup>lxvii</sup> In effect, I mentioned earlier how one such argument might go: if anything has value, then, arguably, at least the universe has some intrinsic value, since the universe would include that valuable thing plus whatever extrinsic conditions secure its value.

One may also assume that some item has instrumental value and then argue that, for anything to have instrumental value, something must have intrinsic value. Then we can conclude that a different item has intrinsic value because that would best explain the first item's instrumental value. Beardsley calls this "the argument from definition."<sup>lxviii</sup> A similar argument can be made for something's having intrinsic disvalue.

By my lights, two of these nine strategies—the appeal to the logic of moral terms and the appeal to what's natural—are unpromising, while the rest stand a good chance of helping us determine what has intrinsic value. Perhaps I have misevaluated some of them. But my main claim is that ethical theory is rich in resources; when philosophers disagree about whether an item has intrinsic worth, rational discussion need not end right away, or even soon.

### 3. Do Good Ethical Arguments Require Ethical Assumptions?

Each of the nine strategies can give rise to a host of specific arguments. Must those arguments make moral or ethical assumptions? Obviously, every argument from analogy will, as will every argument from assumed goods. And arguably, every argument from the logic of moral terms will, since every such argument will assume the legitimacy of some term which, according to the argument itself, is morally loaded. However, six other argument-types remain. These focus on intrinsic properties, intuition, the merits of larger theories, the attitudes of competent judges, what's natural, and the etiology of belief. Many of them will have instances that assume nothing moral or ethical, and some of those will succeed. I will present one such argument in Section 4.

Some philosophers, however, think they know in advance that such an argument cannot succeed. According to Ronald Dworkin, the idea that “there is some way to establish a normative proposition other than through substantive normative arguments” is “a fallacy.”<sup>lxi</sup> “We cannot climb outside of morality,” he says, “to judge it from some external . . . tribunal, any more than we can climb out of reason itself to test it from above.”<sup>lxx</sup> The literature is sprinkled with similar statements. In discussing Dewey’s “problematic situation”—in which some values are assumed but others questioned—Beardsley asserts that, “If the value of everything in the situation were in question at once, nothing could be decided . . .”<sup>lxxi</sup> McDowell, commenting on Aristotle, says much the same thing.<sup>lxxii</sup> And Lockwood believes that “moral arguments . . . need moral premises.”<sup>lxxiii</sup>

But why? According to one rationale, nonmoral support of moral conclusions would violate the prohibition on deriving “ought” from “is.” However, that alleged prohibition

concerns deductive entailment, while I claim that nonmoral premises can nondeductively support moral claims. As Brink notes, proponents of the is/ought gap “have never argued for the claim that there are no good nondeductive arguments from exclusively nonmoral premises to moral conclusions . . .”<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Another rationale appeals to the denial of moral foundationalism. According to moral foundationalism, nonfoundational moral beliefs are justified by foundational moral beliefs, which are justified for some other reason. The denial of moral foundationalism might be thought to entail the impossibility of nonmoral support. Consider the following argument:

1. If nonmoral premises could support moral conclusions, then they could justify some moral foundation.
  2. But moral foundationalism is false.
- C. Therefore, nonmoral premises can't support moral conclusions.

In general, foundationalism is less popular these days than coherentism. And I do suspect that the unpopularity of moral foundationalism generates resistance to the idea of nonmoral support. However, this argument's premises are weak. First, even if empirical premises support moral conclusions, those conclusions might be inadequate as a moral foundation—they might be incapable of justifying a moral system. Second, moral foundationalism is viable, as some philosophers have urged.<sup>lxxv</sup> Arguments premised on its denial are best construed as hypothetical, as bearing on what is at stake in the ongoing debates in moral epistemology.

By criticizing opposing arguments, I have now defended the possibility of constructing good ethical arguments that lack ethical assumptions. But the best way to show that something can be done is to do it. In the next section I will offer an example of a good ethical argument that utilizes no ethical assumptions.

#### 4. Arguments For the Intrinsic Badness of Pains

In a discussion of moral methodology, Tannsjo says that we can revise our beliefs only in light of other beliefs.<sup>lxxvi</sup> But we can also revise our beliefs in light of our experiences—for example, our experiences of pain. My token experience of severe pain gives me some evidence that the experience is bad just due to what it’s like. Hence, it gives me evidence that the experience is intrinsically bad, where “the experience” includes what the experience is like.

This is no argument for the intrinsic badness of my experience, since arguments require premises, and I have appealed, not to a premise, but to an experience. I have posited an instance of what epistemologists call “immediate justification.” Someone’s belief is immediately justified just in case it is justified by something other than its relation to that person’s other beliefs. Here the belief in question—my belief that this experience is intrinsically bad—is justified by my token experience, in the sense that my token experience counts in favor of it.

This claim is modest, in three ways. First, the claim is merely that my token experience of severe pain gives me some evidence that the experience is intrinsically bad; the claim isn't that the evidence is decisive. Second, I build little into the idea that my experience of severe pain is intrinsically bad. Recall that intrinsically bad items (as I've defined 'intrinsically bad') need not give everyone equally strong reasons. Hence, even if my experience is intrinsically bad, others might have little or no reason to end it. Third, I build little into the idea that my experience of severe pain is intrinsically bad. For I remain neutral on whether the (bad) experience consists merely in phenomenology, or in phenomenology conjoined with, say, some motive or affect or belief.<sup>lxxvii</sup> The idea is just that my experience gives me evidence that something intrinsically bad is occurring which can reasonably be called "my experience," be it something purely phenomenological, or something with both phenomenological and non-phenomenological aspects.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

Many philosophers have made similar claims. Pain, suffering, misery, anguish and depression, E. J. Bond says, "are evidently bad or evil because they are experienced as such (because they are such in their natures)."<sup>lxxix</sup> According to James Rachels, "Suffering is so obviously an evil, just on account of what it is like, that argument would be superfluous; and the same goes for enjoyment as a good."<sup>lxxx</sup> Nagel says: "If I have a severe headache, the headache seems to me to be not merely unpleasant, but a bad thing. Not only do I dislike it, but I think I have a reason to try to get rid of it."<sup>lxxxi</sup> Finally, Audi thinks that "an experience of pleasure in viewing a painting indicates the desirability of that viewing, and it may justify an actual desire one has to view it (where I want to view it for pleasure)."<sup>lxxxii</sup>

Passages like these merely express confidence, Korsgaard thinks.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> I disagree. Of course, being in terrible pain does give me confidence that the painful experience is

intrinsically bad, but I can discern that such confidence is appropriate from having the experience. Whether this is right, or whether it's bluff and bluster, each of us must decide, based on his or her experience of severe pain.

“This painful experience is intrinsically bad” can be understood as a perceptual judgment, supported by experience. In calling this “a perceptual judgment” I am not claiming that it's infallible, indubitable, incorrigible, or even true. “I see phlogiston escaping from the witches' bonfire” is another perceptual judgment. But let's compare it to the perceptual judgment, “The sky is blue,” made by someone looking at a blue sky. Some will say that my judgment about the pain “goes beyond” the experiential data, which merely suggest that I dislike the experience. However, I would argue that my judgment doesn't go beyond the experiential data any further than the judgment about the sky does. Just as we apply the concept of “blueness” to the sky, we apply the concept of “intrinsic badness” to the painful experience. The intrinsic badness of an experience may be just as apparent to someone in pain, who has the concept of intrinsic badness, as the blueness of the sky is to someone looking up, who has the concept of blueness. In fact, one might even argue that the judgment about the sky goes further beyond the data, since that judgment is about part of the external world—the sky—whereas the evaluative judgment is just about the experience itself.

Here now is an argument for the intrinsic badness of my experience. It recasts the points about “immediate justification” in premise-to-conclusion form:

1. I have experiential evidence that the experience I'm now having is intrinsically bad.
- C. Therefore, probably, that experience is intrinsically bad.

But what is the nature of this “experiential evidence?” Here is another version of the argument, which elaborates on this idea:

1. I am competent to judge whether the experience I’m now having is intrinsically bad by virtue of having it, and by virtue of understanding the concepts that would be included in my judgment that it is, or isn’t, intrinsically bad.
  2. I judge that this experience is intrinsically bad.
- C. Therefore, probably, it is.

This is a competent judge argument. Since it appeals to the judge’s intuitive assessment of his pain, it may also be cast as an appeal to intuition. Here is how:

1. I have a good grasp of the proposition, “The experience I’m now having is intrinsically bad” by virtue of having this experience, and by virtue of understanding the concepts in the proposition.
  2. I believe, on this basis of this grasp, that this experience is intrinsically bad.
- C. Therefore, probably, it is.

These arguments presuppose nothing moral or ethical. Consider this last variant. In (1), the notion of “having a good grasp” is epistemic, not moral or ethical. And (2) is an empirical, psychological statement. Similarly, in the previous variant, (2) is an empirical statement, while in (1) the notion of “being competent to judge” is epistemic. Thus, these

arguments, if successful, would show that some good ethical arguments lack ethical assumptions.

Here, however, is a line of thought according to which these arguments make ethical assumptions. The first premise of each argument can be said to rely (for support) on experience—on someone’s painful experience or experiences. And according to Nelkin, “Pains consist entirely of a phenomenal state, and the simultaneous, spontaneous appraisal of that state as representing a harm to the body.”<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Were this true, it might be said, then the fact that my arguments rely on an experience of pain entails that they rely on and assume an ethical belief: the belief that a phenomenal state represents a harm to a body. Is this reasoning sound? Elsewhere I have argued against Nelkin’s view.<sup>lxxxv</sup> But anyway the reasoning is fallacious. If Nelkin’s view were correct, then my arguments would rely on something—an experience of pain—which includes or involves an ethical belief. However, my arguments would not assume the truth of that belief; they would not make that moral or ethical assumption.

There are at least three possible objections to these arguments.

1. Suppose I intuit, or competently judge, that a pain of mine is intrinsically bad. It may be said that I am biased with regard to assessing my pain because I dislike it. My opinion should be disregarded, just as if I were assessing a person I dislike.

But the fact that I dislike the pain does not indicate that I’m biased in my assessment of it. Consider this dilemma. Either my judgment is due partly or wholly to my disliking the pain, or it isn’t. If it isn’t, then my disliking is irrelevant to my judgment, and there is no issue of bias. But if my disliking is partly or wholly responsible for my judgment, we

shouldn't automatically dismiss my judgment as stemming from bias. Rather, we should ask why I dislike the pain. And the answer is that I dislike it because I experienced it and found it unpleasant. And the fact that I experienced it is an important part of why I am competent to judge it. Thus ultimately my disliking of the pain stems from conditions conducive to good judgment-making. My judgment should therefore be valued, not ignored. Similarly, we don't automatically disregard someone's assessment of another person just because she dislikes him. Rather, we ask why she does. If the conditions under which she came to dislike him are also conditions that make her competent to judge him, then we wouldn't disregard her opinion as stemming from bias. Rather, we would value her opinion as probative.

2. Some people are repulsed by the sight of two men kissing on the mouth. If so, then why wouldn't similar arguments go to show that such kissing is intrinsically bad? Those arguments would say that some people have experiential evidence that such behavior is intrinsically bad; that some people, who are competent to judge whether such behavior is intrinsically bad, judge that it is; and that some people believe that such behavior is intrinsically bad, based on a good grasp of that proposition. The similarity between these two sets of arguments, conjoined with the fact that homosexual behavior is not intrinsically bad, might seem to discredit my arguments about pain.

In response, first, the repulsion many people feel in seeing men kiss can be attributed to unreliable causes. Most people have rarely seen men kiss and have been exposed to much prejudice against gays. Second, many people are indifferent to, or positively like, watching men kiss; hence we need reason to prefer the argument against gay kissing to the argument

that such kissing is intrinsically neutral or even intrinsically good. Third, it should not be assumed that there can be no evidence for a false moral judgment. Even if experience provided some evidence for the intrinsic badness of homosexual behavior, we have stronger countervailing evidence.

3. Consider analogous arguments that appeal to the fact that masochists like being in pain. These arguments say that some masochist has experiential evidence that his pain is intrinsically good; that someone who is competent to judge believes that his pain is intrinsically good; and that someone believes that his pain is intrinsically good, based on a good grasp of that proposition.

Do these arguments cast doubt on my judgment about my pain? They do not. First, we need an argument that masochists really do like their painful experiences in themselves, in analogy to my disliking my painful experience in itself. For masochists might dislike their painful experiences but like the pleasure that accompanies them; masochists might seek stimuli that cause most people pain but cause them pleasure; masochists might dislike how their pain feels but like that it gratifies their self-loathing. Thus, masochists might not judge their pains to be intrinsically good. Second, perhaps the two cases are importantly disanalogous: perhaps masochistic pain isn't bad, because it isn't disliked, whereas a token of my pain is bad because I dislike it. As I have said, I am not assuming that my experience gives me evidence that my pain phenomenology is intrinsically bad; perhaps the painful experience consists in more than phenomenology.

I conclude that these arguments confirm my main theses: there are good ways to argue about intrinsic value; and some good ethical arguments lack ethical assumptions.

## 5. Conclusion

“The rules of morality . . . are not conclusions of our reason,” writes Hume.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Like many of our contemporaries, Hume believes that rational argument can’t determine which moral system is correct. And perhaps this is right. But rational argument is far from exhausted, I’ve argued, with regard to the “basic” question of what has intrinsic value; many arguments can come into play, some incorporating nonmoral premises alone. I illustrated this by identifying nine argumentative strategies of various promise. Also, I defended an argument for the intrinsic badness of pains, which incorporated no ethical assumptions.

My conclusions are optimistic: there are good ways to argue about what has intrinsic value; some good ethical arguments lack ethical assumptions. With more argumentative resources, we have a better chance of establishing the truth. I have not, however, expressed optimism about ultimately establishing a consensus of opinion. Even if an argument is decisive, it may not sway minds; whether a good argument persuades depends on the rationality of the audience.<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> In this essay, I use 'ethical' and 'moral' interchangeably. I use both terms broadly, to refer to beliefs, arguments or properties that (if true, sound or instantiated) entail the existence of objective value.

<sup>ii</sup> D. Lewis 1983, p. 197. For recent references and a summary of the burgeoning literature on "intrinsic," see Weatherson.

<sup>iii</sup> Moore, Brandt, Chisholm, Korsgaard, Feldman, and Harman, among others, conceive intrinsic value like this. See Moore 1992, pp. 253-275; Brandt 1979, p. 19; Chisholm 1972, p. 262 and 1981, p. 99; Korsgaard, "Two distinctions in goodness," reprinted in Korsgaard 1996b, p. 251; Feldman 1997, p. 457; Harman 2000, Essays 6 and 8. For other (and in my

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opinion, less motivated) uses of ‘intrinsic value,’ see O’Neill 1992.

<sup>iv</sup> Feldman 1998, p. 352.

<sup>v</sup> See Feldman 1998, pp. 349, 351, 352.

<sup>vi</sup> Feldman 1998, p. 351.

<sup>vii</sup> Moore 1903, p. 36.

<sup>viii</sup> Moore 1903, pp. 28-29.

<sup>ix</sup> Kagan 1998, pp. 290-291.

<sup>x</sup> See Mill 1861, ch. 4, para. 3; James 1897, p. 195; Moore 1903, pp. 91, 223; and Narveson 1967, p. 284.

<sup>xi</sup> Smart 1973, p. 31.

<sup>xii</sup> An argument of Chisholm's can be used to support a different rationale. If something has intrinsic value, then so do its perfect duplicates. Chisholm concludes from this that knowledge of intrinsic value is a priori:

Where knowledge of the instrumental value of a state of affairs thus involves knowledge of its causal properties, knowledge of the intrinsic value of a state of affairs may be likened to knowledge of its logical properties. For attributions of intrinsic value are necessary. If pleasure is intrinsically good in this world, then it would be intrinsically good in any world in which it might be found. . . . Hence, as Brentano emphasized, the kind of knowledge we have of intrinsic value is properly said to be a priori. (1986, p. 95)

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If our knowledge of intrinsic value were a priori, this might limit our ability to argue about it. Chisholm, indeed, writes as though no interesting arguments bear on matters of intrinsic value. But our knowledge of intrinsic value is no more a priori than our knowledge of any other intrinsic properties, for example, our empirical, a posteriori knowledge of how many protons a particular atom has. If a particular atom has three protons, then so will any perfect duplicate of it “in any world in which it might be found.” But this doesn’t entail that our knowledge of atomic chemistry is a priori. The same point applies to our knowledge of intrinsic value.

<sup>xiii</sup> “It appears evident, that the ultimate ends of human actions can never, in any case, be accounted for by reason, but recommend themselves entirely to the sentiments and affections of mankind, without any dependence on the intellectual faculties. 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 farther, 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.”

(Hume 1751, Appendix 1, V, p. 87)

<sup>xiv</sup> Beardsley 1965, pp. 12-13, p. 13.

<sup>xv</sup> Bernstein 1999, p. 8.

<sup>xvi</sup> Bernstein 1999, p. 16.

<sup>xvii</sup> Bond 1996, p. 240, n. 2.

<sup>xviii</sup> See Nozick 1981, pp. 413-422.

<sup>xix</sup> A similar response can be made to Beardsley. For the view that persons confer value on objects, see Sher 1987, pp. 57-58 and Korsgaard, “Two distinctions in goodness,” reprinted

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in Korsgaard 1996b, p. 259.

<sup>xx</sup> Korsgaard, “Two distinctions in goodness,” reprinted in Korsgaard 1996b, p. 271.

According to Korsgaard, Plato argues that the just soul is intrinsically good because its internal structure makes its possessor both happy and master of himself. (1996a, pp. 109-110)

<sup>xxi</sup> Korsgaard, “Two distinctions in goodness,” reprinted in Korsgaard 1996b, p. 271.

<sup>xxii</sup> Korsgaard 1996a, p. 109.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See Stich 1990, ch. 5.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Sidgwick 1906, p. 396. Compare Korsgaard: “Pufendorf and Hobbes ask how nature, an indifferent and mechanical world of matter in motion, can come to be imbued with moral properties.” (1996a, p. 22) Johnston claims that this sort of reasoning relies on a false additivity of value. (1997, pp. 167-168) No doubt Moore would have agreed.

<sup>xxv</sup> See Parfit 1984, pt. 1. A self-defeating theory “fails even in its own terms, and thus condemns itself.” (p. 3)

<sup>xxvi</sup> See Kagan 1989, pp. 13-14.

<sup>xxvii</sup> See, for example, D. Lewis 1989, pp. 113-137, especially pp. 121-126.

<sup>xxviii</sup> See, for example, Rawls’ classic paper (1951), especially pp. 178-181.

<sup>xxix</sup> For one of his more recent discussions, see Brandt 1996.

<sup>xxx</sup> Mill 1861, ch. 2, para. 5 and para. 8. For similar thoughts, see Edwards 1979, ch. 6.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Aristotle, X. 2. (The next quotation is from VII. 13.) Epicurus and Diogenes Laertius made basically the same argument. See Diogenes Laertius, p. 63.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Mill 1861, ch. 4, para. 3.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> See James 1897, p. 195 and Narveson 1967, p. 284. Compare Hume: “An action, or

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sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind.” (1739, III. 1. ii, p. 471)

<sup>xxxiv</sup> See Sidgwick 1906, Book IV, ch. III. The plan for that chapter is nicely summarized on p. 422. Also see pp. 406-407. Similarly, Mill says that the steadiness of humankind’s moral beliefs are due to “the tacit influence of a standard not recognized.” (1861, ch. 1, para. 4)

<sup>xxxv</sup> Gewirth believes it can’t be done. (1978, p. 21)

<sup>xxxvi</sup> For a discussion of shared values, see J. Rachels 2003, pp. 23-25.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Ross 1930, p. 29. By “prima facie” Ross means “to some extent” (that is, pro tanto), not “at first glance.”

<sup>xxxviii</sup> C. I. Lewis 1946, p. 375.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Nagel 1986, p. 146.

<sup>xl</sup> See Hare 1973, p. 148. Hare refers us to Rawls 1971, p. 18 (line 9) to p. 20 (line 9). I checked Hare’s tally and came up with virtually the same figure.

<sup>xli</sup> Intuitionists talk about both properties and propositions being intuited. For example, they talk about intuiting goodness as well as intuiting that something is good. I’ll discuss intuitionism in terms of intuited propositions (or beliefs). However, much of my discussion can be adapted to talk of properties.

<sup>xlii</sup> Bennett 1995, p. 12.

<sup>xliii</sup> For variants of this idea, see Lemos 1994, pp. 155-160 and Audi 1996, p. 110, reprinted in Audi 1997, p. 41.

<sup>xliv</sup> D. Lewis 1989, p. 121.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Churchland 1989, p. 303.

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<sup>xlvi</sup> D. Lewis 1989, p. 123.

<sup>xlvii</sup> D. Lewis 1989, p. 122.

<sup>xlviii</sup> See Audi 1996, pp. 112-114, reprinted in Audi 1997, pp. 43-44.

<sup>xlix</sup> Moore 1903, p. 91. Also see p. 223.

<sup>1</sup> In light of this, some intuitionists may want to follow Lemos in not offering positive arguments. Lemos assumes that we have some justified beliefs about intrinsic value and offers an intuitionist account of their justification. He does not, however, “offer a method for resolving disputes about what has intrinsic value or prove that anything has intrinsic value.” (1994, p. 159)

<sup>li</sup> See Gewirth 1978 (for example, pp. 25-26); Hare 1981 (for example, p. 20); Gauthier 1986; M. Singer 1961; Donagan 1977. Michael Smith interprets Korsgaard as arguing for a normative conclusion from a metaethical premise; see Smith 1999, based on Korsgaard 1996a. In assessing these attributions, don’t forget that I am using “intrinsic value” widely, so that actions may be intrinsically good.

Also, as Railton notes, “According to a well-developed tradition in the theory of value, internalism, it is essential to the concept of intrinsic goodness that nothing can be of intrinsic value unless it has a necessary connection to the grounds of action” (where one reading of “the grounds of action” is “motives”). (1989, p. 171) Hence, one may argue, on internalist grounds, that some item isn’t intrinsically good because it needn’t motivate.

<sup>lii</sup> Rawls 1971, p. 51.

<sup>liii</sup> Another approach would argue, not from what’s natural, but from what’s real.

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<sup>liv</sup> For an introduction to the Theory of Natural Law, see J. Rachels 2003, pp. 53-57.

According to Aristotle, “that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing . . .” (X. 7)

<sup>lv</sup> Consider the expressions “natural food,” “the destruction of nature,” “natural beauty products” and “unnatural sex acts.”

<sup>lvi</sup> See de Sousa 1980, p. 170 (in Copp and Zimmerman reprinting).

<sup>lvii</sup> Nietzsche emphasizes the alleged resentment or “ressentiment” of the Jews in 1887, Essay 1, Sect. 10; he emphasizes the alleged utility of slave morality for the oppressed in 1886, Section 260. When Nietzsche says that slave morality has utility for “the violated, oppressed, suffering, unfree, . . . and weary” he is not recommending it.

<sup>lviii</sup> Here I rely on Crisp 1999, p. 98. Crisp refers us to Mill 1859, ch. 1.

<sup>lix</sup> See P. Singer 1999, p. 315.

<sup>lx</sup> Smart 1973, pp. 6, 7, 31.

<sup>lxi</sup> Railton discusses this sort of reasoning in Railton 1989 on pp. 167, 169.

<sup>lxii</sup> Nagel 1997, p. 105. Compare Dworkin, who refers to “the widespread but plainly mistaken assumption that a successful Darwinian explanation of moral concern . . . would have skeptical implications.” (1996, p. 123)

<sup>lxiii</sup> Parfit makes this last point about evolutionary accounts of attitudes. (1984, p. 308)

<sup>lxiv</sup> Sher 1987, p. 133.

<sup>lxv</sup> See Sidgwick 1906, p. 213.

<sup>lxvi</sup> See Korsgaard, “Aristotle and Kant on the source of value,” reprinted in Korsgaard 1996b, pp. 228-239. Also see her “Two distinctions in goodness,” reprinted in Korsgaard 1996b, p. 260 and pp. 261-262.

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<sup>lxvii</sup> Audi 1997, pp. 249-251. Compare what Beardsley calls “The Dialectical Demonstration:” “‘Instrumentally valuable’ is a relational concept—X borrows its value from Y, or Y confers its value upon X. If the value Y confers is itself instrumental, so that it is merely passed along from Z, then where does Z get its value? In the last analysis, something must (according to this argument) possess its value in itself, or nothing can get any value.” (1965, p. 6)

<sup>lxviii</sup> Beardsley 1965, p. 4.

<sup>lxix</sup> Dworkin 1996, p. 127.

<sup>lxx</sup> Dworkin 1996, p. 128.

<sup>lxxi</sup> Beardsley 1965, p. 7.

<sup>lxxii</sup> “If a person conceives her practical situation in terms provided for her by a specific ethical outlook, that will present her with certain apparent reasons for acting. On a better understanding of Aristotle’s picture, the only standpoint at which she can address the question whether those reasons are genuine is one that she occupies precisely because she has a specific ethical outlook. That is a standpoint from which those seeming requirements are viewed as such, not a foundational standpoint at which she might try to reconstruct the demandingness of those requirements from scratch, out of materials from an independent description of nature.” (McDowell 1994, p. 80)

<sup>lxxiii</sup> Lockwood 1997, p. 25.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Brink 1989, p. 169.

<sup>lxxv</sup> See, for example, Timmons 1987, pp. 595-609 and Audi 1996, reprinted in Audi 1997.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> Tannsjo 1998, p. 16.

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<sup>lxxvii</sup> On one view, a pain is an experience that inclines its subject to fight it. See Brandt 1979, p. 38 and Korsgaard 1996a, p. 147. On another view, a pain is an experience that causes its subject to dislike it. See Baier 1958, p. 273; Churchland 1984, p. 52; and Hall 1989, p. 646. See Nelkin, cited below, for the view that a pain is an experience that the subject spontaneously believes to represent a bodily harm. I criticize all these views in S. Rachels 2000.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> In S. Rachels 2000 I argue that unpleasant experiences are bad due to their intrinsic, phenomenological properties.

<sup>lxxix</sup> Bond 1983, p. 127. Also see p. 108.

<sup>lxxx</sup> J. Rachels 1986, p. 46.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> Nagel 1986, p. 145. Also see pp. 157-158.

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Audi 1997, p. 267.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> See Korsgaard 1996a, pp. 33-42, 48.

<sup>lxxxv</sup> Nelkin 1994, p. 332. See Gallie 1954 for a similar view of enjoyment (pp. 147-164).

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> S. Rachels 2000, p. 190.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Hume 1739, III. 1. i, p. 457.

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