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IS INTRINSIC VALUE CONDITIONAL?

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ABSTRACT. According to G.E. Moore, something's intrinsic value depends solely on its intrinsic nature. Recently Thomas Hurka and Shelly Kagan have argued, contra Moore, that something's intrinsic value may depend on its extrinsic properties. Call this view the 'Conditional View' of intrinsic value. In this paper I demonstrate how a Moorean can account for purported counterexamples given by Hurka and Kagan. I then argue that certain organic unities pose difficulties for the Conditional View.

INTRODUCTION

In "The Conception of Intrinsic Value," G.E. Moore defines intrinsic value as follows: "*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.*"¹ Call this the "Supervenience Principle." The Supervenience Principle is closely related to other Moorean doctrines concerning intrinsic value. One such doctrine is that something has intrinsic value if and only if it would have value in complete isolation – that is, even if it were the only thing existing in the universe.² Call this the "Isolation Principle." Very roughly speaking, something's intrinsic properties are the properties it would have in isolation.³ If that is so, and if we assume that something's intrinsic nature consists of its intrinsic properties, then the Supervenience Principle and the Isolation Principle turn out to be equivalent.⁴ Another doctrine is that when something is intrinsically good, it is necessarily intrinsically good; it has its intrinsic value whenever and wherever it exists or obtains.⁵ Call this the "Necessity Principle." If the bearers of intrinsic value are entities that have their intrinsic properties of necessity, such as states of affairs, then the Necessity Principle follows from the Supervenience Principle. Since



Moore held each of these views at one time or another, let's call this cluster of views the "Moorean View" of intrinsic value.

Over the years, the Moorean View has been the subject of many attacks. These attacks have typically been made by philosophers who deny that there is any such thing as intrinsic value.⁶ Recently, however, some have begun to wonder if the problem is not with the notion of intrinsic value itself, but with the Moorean View of intrinsic value. A number of philosophers, while maintaining that intrinsic value is a concept of great importance, have argued that something's intrinsic value may depend on its extrinsic properties (denying the Supervenience Principle), and that therefore, something's intrinsic value may change if it were isolated or if it existed in different circumstances (denying the Isolation Principle and Necessity Principle). For example, Shelly Kagan argues that something's historical importance could endow it with intrinsic value (Kagan, 1998), and Robert Elliot claims that something's rarity could increase its intrinsic value (Elliot, 1992). Call this the "Conditional View" of intrinsic value. In what follows, I will first defend the Moorean View against some recent attacks. I will then attempt to provide a positive definition of the Conditional View of intrinsic value that goes beyond a simple denial of the Moorean View. Finally, I will explain how the two views treat organic unities, and I will argue that the Moorean View gives a more plausible account of organic unities than the Conditional View.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE MOOREAN VIEW

Kagan argues that the Moorean View renders certain plausible axiologies incoherent. For example, since uniqueness and historical importance are extrinsic properties, it would seem that the Moorean cannot claim that they are a basis for intrinsic value; this would violate the Supervenience Principle. Yet Kagan argues that it seems quite plausible to suppose that a painting has more intrinsic value when it is unique, or that a pen has more intrinsic value if it is used to sign an important historical document (Kagan, 1998, pp. 282–288). For example, the Mona Lisa might be thought to be less intrinsically valuable if it were to turn out that Da Vinci had painted another one just like it, and the pen used by Lincoln

to sign the Emancipation Proclamation might be thought to be more intrinsically valuable than another pen that is intrinsically similar. In response, the Moorean could reject Kagan's intuitions concerning uniqueness and historical importance. In particular, the Moorean might question whether it is really a morally important kind of intrinsic value that Kagan is talking about here. However, this approach will strike some as high-handed, so for the sake of argument, let us grant that there is something to Kagan's intuitions about the values of important pens and rare paintings.

A better response for the Moorean is to claim that it is not things like pens and paintings that have intrinsic value; rather, it is states of affairs involving these things. While the Moorean cannot attribute intrinsic value to a pen because it was used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, he can attribute intrinsic value to a state of affairs involving that pen: the state of affairs *that this pen was used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation*. By attributing intrinsic value to such states of affairs, the Moorean can apparently account for all of the intuitions in question. For every intrinsic value claim that someone wants to make about a pen or a painting, the Moorean can make a corresponding intrinsic value claim about a state of affairs.

Kagan argues that this response is not truly open to the Moorean, because it violates the spirit of the view. This is because the properties ascribed by intrinsically valuable states of affairs would not be limited to intrinsic properties. Being used by Lincoln to sign the proclamation is not an intrinsic property of the pen. To be a true Moorean, according to Kagan, is not just to believe that a state's intrinsic value depends on its intrinsic properties. It is also to hold that the only states of affairs that have intrinsic value are ones that *ascribe* only intrinsic properties to something. Here is his reasoning for this claim:

I take it, after all, that most friends of the [Moorean] tradition would insist that uniqueness cannot be relevant to intrinsic value . . . They would insist, similarly, that usefulness cannot be relevant to intrinsic value . . . And they would insist as well that instrumental value cannot be relevant to intrinsic value . . . But to insist upon these things – within the framework in which only facts have intrinsic value – they must insist that the ascribed properties relevant to a fact's intrinsic value must themselves be intrinsic properties. (Kagan, 1998, pp. 295–296)

It may be that Mooreans sometimes say such things. But Kagan's way of putting what Mooreans deny is ambiguous; the claim that

“uniqueness cannot be relevant to intrinsic value” can be interpreted in at least two different ways. Mooreans do indeed deny that for any x , the uniqueness or usefulness of x is relevant to x 's intrinsic value. But I know of no evidence that Mooreans would deny that for any x , states of affairs ascribing uniqueness or usefulness to x could have intrinsic value.

In fact, it must be pointed out that many philosophers within the Moorean tradition have thought that states of affairs ascribing non-intrinsic properties have intrinsic value. Take knowledge, for instance. Many philosophers have thought that knowledge is intrinsically good, including Ross and Moore, who are part of the Moorean tradition if anyone is.⁷ What these philosophers probably mean is that states of affairs that ascribe knowledge to someone – e.g., the state of affairs that consists of my knowing that Bush is the president – are intrinsically good. But knowing that Bush is president is not an intrinsic property. I currently know that Bush is the president; but there could be someone who is intrinsically just like me who does not know that Bush is the president – because in that person's country, Bush is not the president.

Furthermore, if pleasure is not a feeling but a propositional attitude – as some philosophers now believe – it seems likely that states of affairs that attribute pleasure to someone in fact attribute an extrinsic property to that person.⁸ Similar things might be said about justice. It seems unlikely that a value theory that gives justice some weight in assignments of intrinsic value could assign intrinsic value only to states of affairs that ascribe intrinsic properties to people or objects. So we have at least three sorts of things – knowledge, propositional pleasure, and justice – that have intrinsic value according to many friends of the Moorean tradition, yet could not have intrinsic value according to Kagan's interpretation of the spirit of Mooreanism. I think it would be quite uncharitable to accuse all such philosophers of holding incompatible positions. It would be much more charitable to suppose that Mooreanism places no restrictions on what sorts of ascribed properties can enter into intrinsically good states of affairs. I can think of no good reason for such a restriction, nor do I know of a single philosopher who has argued for this restriction.

In response to the above defense of Mooreanism, Kagan writes that the Mooreans' attribution of intrinsic value to states of affairs

allows them to insist that what is actually relevant to intrinsic value is simply an intrinsic property *of the whole* (roughly, that one part, the knower, stands in the right relation to another part, the object known). Yet it is often difficult to see what motivates the turn to wholes in this way, except the very belief that the *only* base level properties that are relevant to intrinsic value are *intrinsic* properties. (Kagan, 1998, p. 296n)

Kagan appears to be arguing that there is no motivation for the idea that states of affairs are the bearers of intrinsic value, beyond the motivation of saving Mooreanism. This suggests a different line of attack against Mooreanism. While it may be admitted that the Moorean can substitute an intrinsic value claim about states of affairs for an intrinsic value claim about a pen, opponents of Mooreanism may wonder whether in doing so, the Moorean locates the value in the wrong place.⁹

I do not believe that the adoption of states of affairs as the bearers of intrinsic value is an *ad hoc* strategy designed merely to save the Moorean View; rather, there are good independent reasons to think that states of affairs must be the bearers of intrinsic value. One reason is that states of affairs are fine-grained. This enables us to distinguish, for example, between the fact that Jeffrey is pleased and the fact that Jeffrey is pleased that his victim is suffering. We might wish to say that Jeffrey's pleasure is intrinsically good, but his pleasure in his victim's suffering is not intrinsically good; or we might wish to say that Jeffrey's pleasure is neither intrinsically good nor bad as such, but that his pleasure in his victim's suffering is intrinsically bad. We cannot make such claims unless the bearers of intrinsic value are fine-grained entities such as states of affairs or facts.¹⁰ We certainly could not make such claims by attributing value to Jeffrey himself. Perhaps this provides sufficient independent motivation for the view that states of affairs are the bearers of intrinsic value. In any case, it is important to realize that the apparent difficulty raised by Kagan and others for the Moorean View does not point to an inability on the part of the Mooreans to account for particular kinds of value intuitions. By adopting states of affairs as the bearers of value, the Moorean View becomes flexible enough to account for virtually any attribution of intrinsic value. So

in the end, the success of arguments such as Kagan's will depend on whether it is plausible to take states of affairs as value bearers.¹¹

Provided we accept states of affairs as the bearers of intrinsic value, we can account for Kagan's examples. However, Thomas Hurka presents an argument against the Moorean View that cannot be dismissed quite so easily.

Several philosophers hold that if a person pursues a good goal, the successful achievement of that goal, even after his death, makes his pursuit intrinsically better than if his efforts had ended in failure. For example, if he works for the preservation of Venice, and if partly through his efforts Venice is preserved after his death, his activities are better than if Venice had been destroyed . . . It is assumed that a person has reason to care if not exclusively then at least more about goods in his own life. But this assumption goes better with a conditionality than with a holistic [Moorean] interpretation. On the former, the extra value . . . is located in the person's activities and therefore in his life . . . On the holistic interpretation, by contrast, the additional value is located not in his life but in a whole combining activities in his life and events after his death. And why should that whole be a special concern of his? (Hurka, 1998, p. 306)

Hurka's point is that since, according to the Supervenience Principle, only something's intrinsic properties can affect that thing's intrinsic value, the Moorean cannot say that events occurring outside one's life can affect the intrinsic value of that life.¹² The Moorean may once again respond that the bearer of intrinsic value in this case is not the activity (considered as a concrete event), but rather a state of affairs consisting of this person preserving Venice. But this response will not work so obviously here, for Hurka will argue that such a state of affairs is not part of that person's life. After all, in the example, Venice is not successfully preserved until after the person dies.

This raises difficult questions about the nature of a life. What states of affairs constitute one's life? Hurka seems to be endorsing, or at least considering as plausible, a view about lives in the following passage: "We can equate a person's life with a sequence of states or events within his body and mind and still say that the value of that life is affected by relations to external states even though neither those states nor the facts relating him to them are internal to his life" (Hurka, 1998, p. 307n). We might put his view like this: S's life consists of all the states of affairs that attribute *intrinsic properties* to S. Thus, S's being six feet tall, or raising his right hand,

would be part of S's life, but S's helping to preserve Venice would not be a part of his life.

I reject this view about lives, on the grounds that it is too restrictive.¹³ When reading a biography, we are not very interested in things that happen inside the person's body. The important things that happen in someone's life, the things we would want to read about in her biography, are events that involve other people and places – things like being born, getting married, going to college, or climbing a mountain. Any view about lives that does not include these sorts of things cannot be an acceptable view of lives. But if Hurka's definition is implausible, then we have no good reason to accept the argument, for there will be no good reason to say that helping to preserve Venice could not be a part of someone's life. I presume that according to any plausible principle that tells us which states of affairs are part of someone's life, preserving Venice could be included – even if Venice is not preserved until after that person's death. It is difficult to see how such a principle could exclude preserving Venice, yet include other states that we would all want to say are important parts of our lives.

WHAT IS THE CONDITIONAL VIEW?

Nothing I have said thus far provides positive support for the Moorean View. I have merely tried to defend the view against certain arguments. In order to argue for the Moorean View, we must first get a grip on what the alternative view might be and how it is different. Those who would espouse the Conditional View cannot stop at a simple denial of the Moorean View. If intrinsic value does not have the features attributed to it by Moore, then what features does it have? Conditional View defenders have an obligation to provide a positive account of intrinsic value – one that distinguishes intrinsic value from other sorts of value, such as instrumental value. This is no easy task.

Hurka argues that it is plausible to suppose that the intrinsic value of a beautiful painting may increase if the painting is contemplated and appreciated by someone. This is incompatible with the Moorean View, since being contemplated or appreciated is an extrinsic property.¹⁴ To explain how it is plausible to suppose that it

is intrinsic value, not extrinsic value, that we are talking about here, Hurka says the following:

In the conditionality version of Moore's later view, not just anything becomes good when it is the object of admiring contemplation; only beauty does and ugliness does not . . . And beauty and knowledge have this status because of their intrinsic natures; their intrinsic properties make them such that when they stand in certain relations they are good. Though the source of their value is not purely internal, it is also not purely external. (Hurka, 1998, pp. 303–304)

Hurka seems to be saying that the reason the beautiful painting is intrinsically better when contemplated has to do *in part* with the extrinsic property of being contemplated, but *also* in part with its intrinsic properties. If the painting had different intrinsic properties – for example, if it were ugly – then the contemplation of it might not be such a good thing. Thus, in order for something to have intrinsic value, its value must not come entirely from its extrinsic properties. This suggests the following definition of conditional intrinsic value:

CIV1: x has intrinsic value iff x has a kind of value that depends in part on x's intrinsic properties.¹⁵

Unfortunately, CIV1 fails to distinguish intrinsic value from other sorts of value. For example, something's instrumental value will almost always depend in part on its intrinsic properties. If the dollar bill in my wallet were twice as large as it is, or made of a different material, it would not be accepted as legal currency and would lose whatever instrumental value it has. If my hammer had the density of balsa wood rather than metal, it would lose its instrumental value. Money and hammers have kinds of value that depend in part on their intrinsic properties; but money and hammers are clear examples of things that do not have intrinsic value. It is hard to think of any valuable things whose values do not depend, at least in part, on their intrinsic properties.

Hurka suggests a different account of intrinsic value in the following passage: "When it actually exists, conditional value plays the same role as uncontentiously intrinsic value. It contributes directly to the overall value of the world; it is something we should care about and pursue for its own sake because of its value" (Hurka, 1998, p. 304). This suggests the following account of intrinsic value:

CIV2: x has intrinsic value iff x contributes directly to the overall value of the world.

There is an important obscurity in this proposal: namely, the word ‘directly’. What does it mean to say that something contributes *directly* to the value of the world? Perhaps the idea is this. When we consider something that has merely instrumental value, it contributes value to the world in virtue of bringing *something else* of value into the world. We can fully explain its value by appealing to the value of the other thing, and telling a story about how the two things are related. Thus, its contribution to the value of the world is mediated by the other valuable thing; it is *indirect*. Things that contribute *directly* to the value of the world, on the other hand, have value that is not fully accounted for by the values of other things. So we define the notion of a “direct contribution” in the following way:

DI: x contributes directly to the overall value of the world =
df. (i) x contributes to the overall value of the world, and
(ii) there are no things distinct from x whose values fully account for x’s contribution to the value of the world.

Then we would have the following account of intrinsic value:

CIV2': x has intrinsic value iff (i) x contributes to the overall value of the world, and (ii) x’s contribution to the value of the world cannot be fully accounted for by the values of things distinct from x.

But this is still not quite right. *CIV2'* seems to go wrong with respect to preventive value.¹⁶ Certain things, such as vaccinations, contribute to the value of the world, but do so not in virtue of bringing something good into the world, but in virtue of preventing something evil from occurring. There is no other actual thing whose value fully explains the value of the vaccination; vaccinations would have value even if those vaccinated go on to live mediocre lives, in virtue of the fact that their lives would have been much worse without the vaccinations. If a vaccination contributes to the value of the world, but not in virtue of the value of some other thing, then *CIV2'* entails that a vaccination has intrinsic value. I take it that this result is unacceptable.

The value of a vaccination seems to be determined not by any actually obtaining state of affairs, but by a state of affairs that

obtains only in some other possible world: the bad state of affairs consisting of someone getting the disease that the vaccination is designed to prevent.¹⁷ The worse the evil prevented, the more valuable the vaccination is. Even states of affairs that are merely possible can affect something's contribution to the value of the world. So I propose the following modification to the conditional view:

CIV3: x has intrinsic value iff (i) x contributes to the overall value of the world, and (ii) there are no actual *or merely possible* things distinct from x whose values fully account for x's contribution to the value of the world.

This account of intrinsic value does not seem to have the problems of the other accounts. It does not entail that money has intrinsic value. The mere existence of money does not make the world any better; it makes the world better only by bringing about other good things, so its contribution to the value of the world is indirect.¹⁸ But it does seem to leave open the possibility that a rare painting, for example, might have additional intrinsic value. There is no other thing whose value accounts for the value of the painting; rather, the very fact that there are no other similar objects of value is what allegedly increases its intrinsic value. So perhaps the rare painting contributes directly to the overall value of the world.

One problem remains that is worth discussing here. Consider the following state of affairs:

M: *Mary is happy to degree 12 at noon and John is asleep.*

If eudaimonism were true, *M* would be intrinsically good. However, according to the definition of direct contribution just provided, *M* does not seem to contribute directly to the value of the world. Instead, *M* makes the world better in virtue of the fact that it entails the state of affairs

H: *Mary is happy to degree 12 at noon.*

One way to account for this is to allow the direct contribution of something to depend on the contributions of its parts. *H* is a part of *M*, so even though the contribution of *H* fully explains the contribution of *M*, *M* may still be said to contribute directly to the value of the world; thus, *M* may be said to have intrinsic value.¹⁹ This suggests a final revision of the conditional view:

CIV4: x has intrinsic value iff (i) x contributes to the overall value of the world, and (ii) there are no actual or merely possible things distinct from x or x 's parts whose values fully account for x 's contribution to the value of the world.

I am not certain that Hurka, Elliot, or Kagan would accept *CIV4*. One possible difficulty arises when we consider Kagan's example of the pen used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. Recall that Kagan argues that it is possible that this pen could have *intrinsic* value in virtue of its great *instrumental* value.²⁰ *CIV4* seems to rule out this possibility; for in such a case, the intrinsic value of the pen would be determined (in some unspecified way) by the value of the freedom of the slaves. Perhaps this makes the pen's contribution to the value of the world indirect. Other problems may also remain. However, *CIV4* does seem superior to other attempts to formulate a conditional view; for that reason, for the purposes of the remainder of this paper, I will take *CIV4* to be the notion of intrinsic value required by the Conditional View.

ORGANIC UNITIES

I now turn to presenting arguments against the Conditional View; in order to do so, I must explain how the two views differ in their treatment of organic unities. Let us understand an organic unity to be something whose intrinsic value is not equal to the sum of the basic intrinsic values of its parts when those parts exist independently.²¹

There is one difference between the views that is very important. Hurka explains it in this way: "The first difference concerns the location of the additional value in an organic unity, which the holistic interpretation places in the whole as a whole but the conditionality interpretation places in a part" (Hurka, 1998, p. 305). Take the contemplation of beauty, for instance. The Conditional View can say that when a beautiful object such as the Mona Lisa is contemplated, the beautiful object makes a greater contribution to the value of the world; thus, its intrinsic value increases. This would violate the Supervenience Principle. So the Moorean cannot attribute more intrinsic value to the Mona Lisa when it is contemplated than when it is alone. Instead, the Moorean must say that there is an organic unity,

consisting of the contemplation and the painting, that has intrinsic value.²²

The Moorean also holds that, when the value of a whole *W* is not equal to the sum of the intrinsic values of its parts, *W* has value “as a whole.”²³ That is, the Moorean holds that *W* has *basic* intrinsic value – value that is *not derived* from the values of any of its parts, but instead results simply from the way in which the parts are put together.²⁴ Every organic unity has basic intrinsic value. Mere sums, on the other hand, have no basic intrinsic value; their intrinsic values are determined solely by the intrinsic values of their parts. Note that something’s basic intrinsic value may not be the same as its intrinsic value “on the whole.” The following passage from Moore expresses the relationship between intrinsic value “as a whole,” or basic intrinsic value, and intrinsic value “on the whole,” or overall intrinsic value: “the value which a thing possesses *on the whole* may be said to be equivalent to the sum of the value which it possesses *as a whole, together with* the intrinsic values which may belong to any of its parts” (Moore, 1903, p. 214; his emphasis). The way I interpret Moore, he is claiming that to find the intrinsic value of an organic unity, we add its basic intrinsic value to the sum of the basic intrinsic values of its proper parts.

I think that some plausible ideas about specific kinds of organic unities pose problems for the Conditional View.²⁵ I would like to examine one of these ideas in detail: the idea that having a variety of parts increases the value of a whole. Consider the following example given by Roderick Chisholm:

Suppose, for example, that *A* is a beautiful painting, that *B* is a painting exactly like *A*, and that *C* is a beautiful piece of music. The aesthetic contemplation of *A* may have the same [intrinsic] value as that of *B* and also the same [intrinsic] value as that of *C*. But the whole that is the aesthetic contemplation of *A* followed by that of *C* is intrinsically better than that whole that is the aesthetic contemplation of *A* followed by that of *B*. Hence one could say that the value of a *bonum variationis* is greater than the sum of the values of its constituent parts. (Chisholm, 1986, p. 71)

Let us assign some specific intrinsic values to the experiences Chisholm describes. Suppose that an isolated aesthetic contemplation of *A* would have an intrinsic value of +10, as would an isolated aesthetic contemplation of *B* or *C*. Suppose that the intrinsic value of contemplating *A* and *B* would simply be the sum of the isolated

contemplations, or +20. Finally, suppose that in virtue of the variety of the experiences involved, the intrinsic value of the contemplation of A and C would be greater than the intrinsic value of the contemplation of A and B. (Note that the greater value is the result of the variety itself, and *not* due to any additional pleasure that could result from that variety.) Let us stipulate that the intrinsic value of the contemplation of A and C would be +30. Now we can imagine some simple possible worlds, and it would seem that we have enough information to assign intrinsic values to these worlds, if we assume that nothing else of value takes place there:

- W1 – contemplation of A and C. IV (W1) = +30.
- W2 – contemplation of A and B. IV (W2) = +20.
- W3 – contemplation of A. IV (W3) = +10.
- W4 – contemplation of B. IV (W4) = +10.
- W5 – contemplation of C. IV (W5) = +10.
- W6 – no contemplation. IV (W6) = 0.

Provided we accept Brentano's intuition about the value of variety, there should be nothing objectionable about this assignment of intrinsic values to worlds. The only interesting thing about this assignment of values is what is going on in W1. How does the extra value get in there? Let us see what the two views say about this.

First, consider the Moorean View. According to the Moorean View, the intrinsic value of the contemplation of A in W1 must be the same as the intrinsic value of the contemplation of A in W3. This follows from the Necessity Principle. The same goes for the intrinsic value of the contemplation of C; it must be the same in W1 and W5. Since the contemplation of A and the contemplation of C each has an intrinsic value of +10 when isolated, each must have an intrinsic value of +10 in W1 as well. So where does the extra value in W1 come from? According to the Moorean View, the extra value comes from the organic unity consisting of the contemplation of A and C. This organic unity gets a basic intrinsic value of its own. We get the intrinsic value of W1 by summing the basic intrinsic values of all the basically intrinsically valuable things there: the contemplation of A, the contemplation of C, and the contemplation of A and C. Since the intrinsic value of W1 is +30, and the intrinsic values of the contemplation of A and the contemplation of C sum to +20, it seems reasonable to suppose that the *basic* intrinsic value

of the contemplation of A and C must be +10.²⁶ Note that while the contemplation of A and C has a *basic* intrinsic value of only +10, its *overall* intrinsic value, as determined by the Moorean summative principle introduced above, is +30.²⁷

Now let us consider the Conditional View. Remember that the Conditional View denies the Necessity Principle; thus, the intrinsic value of the contemplation of A (C) need not be the same at W1 as at W3 (W5). According to the Conditional View as I understand it, to determine the intrinsic value of the contemplation of C at W1, we figure out how much the contemplation of C directly contributes to the value of the world. The contemplation of C increases the value of the world by +20, since the value of W1 is greater than the value of W3 by +20. So in W1, the contemplation of C must have an intrinsic value of +20. The increased intrinsic value is explained by the fact that the contemplation of C is different from the contemplation of A.

The problem arises when we notice that we can say exactly the same thing about the contemplation of A that we can say about the contemplation of C. To determine the intrinsic value of A at W1, we determine its direct contribution to the value of the world; since W1 is +20 better than W5, the intrinsic value of A at W1 must be +20. Again, this is explained by the fact that the contemplation of A is different from the contemplation of C. Now we have a problem. If the contemplation of A has an intrinsic value of +20 at W1, and so does the contemplation of C, then it would seem that the intrinsic value of W1 should turn out to be +40. That's too much value.

Notice that simply changing the initial assignments of values to worlds does not solve the problem. If we had initially assigned W1 an intrinsic value of +40, then the intrinsic values of the contemplation of A and the contemplation of C at W1 would each turn out to be +30; in which case the intrinsic value of W1 would turn out to be not +40, but +60.

The root of the problem is that while the Moorean View assigns merely *extrinsic* value to the components of the organic unity in W1, the Conditional View assigns *intrinsic* value. We do not add extrinsic values to determine the value of a world; we add only (basic) intrinsic values. Thus, the Moorean View does not ascribe too much value to W1, as the Conditional View seems to.

I now turn to some possible objections. One objection to my argument could be that Brentano was wrong; it is not better to have a variety of goods than to have similar goods. While Brentano's view is certainly controversial, and quite possibly wrong, it is at the very least an intelligible view. I have argued elsewhere that Brentano's principle provides the most plausible explanation for the special value of members of endangered species.²⁸ Therefore, the view should not be rejected on definitional grounds. If Brentano's view is incompatible with a definition of intrinsic value, then I would be inclined to reject the definition, not Brentano's view. Furthermore, and more importantly, the Conditional View will have the same problem with Brentano's other principles, attributing value to progression and retribution.²⁹ If any of these principles is plausible, the Conditional View should be rejected.

Another objection might be that I have misapplied the Conditional View. The Conditional View, it might be argued, would not assign additional intrinsic value to both parts of an organic unity, but only to one. Therefore, the problem of extra value would not arise. But this objection seems wrong. It would seem simply arbitrary to choose one of the experiences as the one that has the additional value. Anything that we can say about the contemplation of A, we can also say about the contemplation of C.

Some might think that I have misapplied the Conditional View in a different way. The contemplation of A does not make a direct contribution of +20 to the world, and neither does the contemplation of C. Because the value of the contemplation of A depends on the contemplation of C, its contribution to the value of the world is at least partially *indirect*. But this is simply to give the game to the Mooreans. If 'direct contribution' is defined in such a way as to eliminate the possibility that the existence of something distinct from x can affect the intrinsic value of x, then the Moorean can agree with the so-called Conditional View; for such a definition would remove the conditional aspects of the view.

It might also be thought that I have misinterpreted the Conditional View. My argument depends crucially upon the idea that to determine the direct contribution of the contemplation of A to the value of W1, we compare the value of W1 with the value of W5, since W5 is just like W1 except that the contemplation of A is

removed. Perhaps that is not the way to calculate the direct contribution of A to the value of W1. If not, then I do not know how to do it. Those who would espouse the Conditional View need to provide an account of how this calculation is to be done; until then, the merits of this objection are unclear.

Conditional View defenders might complain that my argument depends upon an objectionable summative principle. My argument supposes that to find the value of a world, we simply add up the basic intrinsic values of the states of affairs that are true there.³⁰ But a number of examples have been thought to pose a problem for principles such as this one. One such problem involves worlds that are infinitely large or infinitely long; another is Parfit's "Repugnant Conclusion."³¹ These are indeed serious problems. Discussion of the merits and defects of various summative principles would take us beyond the scope of this paper. But it is not enough for Conditional View defenders simply to reject the summative principle; they must also put something in its place, and show how the replacement principle avoids the problem. After all, the same problem might arise for the Conditional View given any plausible principle determining the value of a world. The merits of this objection cannot be evaluated until we have a proposed replacement for the summative principle.

The final objection I will consider is more complicated. In order to make the values turn out right, the Conditional View defender might point out that it is only *basic* intrinsic values that we add up to determine the values of worlds. Thus, it could be argued that when a state such as the contemplation of A is part of an organic unity, it no longer has any basic intrinsic value. Instead, only the whole unity has basic intrinsic value. Just as something's intrinsic value can change depending on what wholes it is a part of, so can its basic intrinsic value. By employing this strategy, the Conditional View defender could agree that the intrinsic value of W1 is +30. In the case I have presented, we are to imagine that the contemplation of A, by itself, has basic intrinsic value of +10, but that when it is part of an organic unity in W1, its intrinsic value increases to +20 while its basic intrinsic value disappears entirely. The organic unity consisting of the contemplation of A and C would be assigned a basic intrinsic value of +30. Since basic intrinsic value is a technical concept that is introduced, at least in part, to account for

double-counting problems, it makes sense for the Conditional View defender to employ such a strategy to account for this sort of case.³²

However, it seems to me that this strategy is incompatible with the conditional account of intrinsic value presented above. Recall that according to the conditional view as I have interpreted it, something has intrinsic value if it contributes *directly* to the value of the world:

CIV4: x has intrinsic value iff (i) x contributes to the overall value of the world, and (ii) there are no actual or merely possible things distinct from x or x's parts whose values fully account for x's contribution to the value of the world.

It seems that given the solution to the problem just proposed, the contributions of the parts of an organic unity must be indirect, since the basic intrinsic value of the organic unity fully accounts for the parts' contributions to the value of the world. Thus, according to CIV4, the parts do not have intrinsic value at all. According to the idea just presented, the contribution of the parts to the value of the world is *mediated* by the organic unity of which they are a part; it is only the unity that contributes directly.³³ In order to be able to say that the parts of the organic unity have intrinsic value, the Conditional View defender may claim that it is only *basic* intrinsic value, not regular intrinsic value, that contributes directly to the value of the world. But this leaves (regular) intrinsic value, and its distinctness from extrinsic value, unexplained. In order for Conditional View defenders to defend their view against my argument in the way just suggested, they must either deny that the parts of the organic unity have any intrinsic value at all (regular or basic), or else provide a different distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value.

I do not pretend to have refuted the Conditional View. Much more needs to be said about the relative advantages and disadvantages of the Moorean View and the Conditional View. Perhaps there is an advantage to the Conditional View that could outweigh the problem I just noted. Furthermore, those who endorse the Conditional View might reject the conception of intrinsic value I attribute to them. I draw the following modest conclusion: that the Moorean View is better than the Conditional View (as I have presented it here) at

accounting for *some* organic unities, and it is as yet unclear that there are any advantages to the Conditional View.

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NOTES

¹ Moore, 1951, p. 260. Also see Feldman, 1997, pp. 136–139.

² See Moore, 1903, p. 187.

³ The property of being alone is a much-discussed example of a non-intrinsic property that something could have in isolation.

⁴ Sometimes natures are considered to be essences. If Moore had this conception of intrinsic nature in mind, then the Supervenience Principle and Isolation Principle would not be equivalent. However, I think it is clear that Moore thought of something's intrinsic nature as consisting of its intrinsic properties: "For we should naturally say of two things which were *exactly alike* intrinsically, in spite of their being *two*, that they possessed the *same* intrinsic nature" (Moore, 1951, p. 262; his emphasis). Nowhere in his discussion of intrinsic natures does Moore mention essences. (I thank an anonymous referee for pointing out this distinction.)

⁵ See Moore, 1951, pp. 260–261; Moore, 1903, p. 30; Feldman, 1997, pp. 139–140; Lemos, 1994, pp. 32–33.

⁶ Pragmatists often take this line; see, for example, Beardsley, 1961.

⁷ See Ross, 1930, pp. 138–141; Moore, 1903, chapter 6 *passim*.

⁸ For example, see Feldman, 1997, chapter 5.

⁹ Several authors, including Elizabeth Anderson (1993) and Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen (1999), have recently argued that concrete objects such as people and paintings, not abstract objects like states of affairs, must be the bearers of intrinsic value. They argue that only if a thing itself is valuable can states of affairs involving that thing be valuable; and therefore, it is incorrect to ascribe intrinsic value to a state involving that thing rather than to the thing itself. For example, Anderson claims that we rationally value a person's welfare only if we rationally value the person herself (Anderson, 1993, p. 26). I do not

wish to deal with these arguments here, as they have been examined in some detail elsewhere; see chapter 3 of Zimmerman Forthcoming A, and Zimmerman Forthcoming B.

¹⁰ Michael Zimmerman makes a similar argument; see Zimmerman Forthcoming A, chapter 3. Also see Chisholm, 1986, chapter 7.

¹¹ There is another possible Moorean response to these arguments. It may be that there are two distinct kinds of intrinsic value: one that applies to concrete particular objects, and another that applies to states of affairs. I discuss this idea in my “Two Conceptions of Intrinsic Value” (manuscript).

¹² I follow Hurka in not distinguishing between events and states. I do not think the distinction makes a difference here. If the distinction does make a difference – perhaps because events are not fine-grained, while states of affairs are – then it is open to the Moorean simply to deny that events have intrinsic value, and reinterpret Hurka’s claims as claims about states of affairs.

¹³ I follow Kagan (1994) in rejecting this view.

¹⁴ Naturally, the Moorean can still say that there is something that has intrinsic value here: a state of affairs consisting of the painting and contemplation. The Conditional View defender will argue that this puts the value in the wrong place – that the value must be in the painting itself.

¹⁵ Robert Elliot suggests a similar view. According to Elliot, something’s intrinsic value does not depend solely upon its intrinsic properties. Instead, the intrinsic value of something is a function of its “value-adding” and “value-subtracting” properties (Elliot, 1992, pp. 138–139). Value-adding properties are any properties that increase the *overall value* of the thing that has them; value-subtracting properties are properties that decrease the overall value of the thing that has them (p. 138). These properties may be intrinsic or extrinsic properties (p. 139). Elliot uses the concept of a value-adding property to define ‘intrinsically good’ (or ‘good in itself’) as follows: “‘good in itself’ has to be read as ‘good in virtue of the (value-adding) properties it possesses’. Read thus, relational properties are not ruled out” (p. 139). It should be clear that Elliot’s proposal shares all of the defects of Hurka’s proposal.

¹⁶ I thank Fred Feldman for pointing out this difficulty with CIV2.

¹⁷ For more on the value of prevention, see Conee (1982) and Bradley (1998).

¹⁸ Of course, the money still has *some* sort of value even if it brings about nothing else of value; but this does not seem to be a sort of value that makes the world better overall.

¹⁹ The idea of parthood I employ here is the one used by Chisholm (1986, p. 73).

²⁰ Kagan, 1998, pp. 285–288. I think there will be difficulties in attempting to formulate an account of intrinsic value that can account for this sort of example; however, I will not examine these difficulties here.

²¹ I add the phrase ‘when those parts exist independently’ because the Conditional View allows the intrinsic value of something to change depending on whether it exists independently or as part of a whole. Thus, the Conditional View may say that the intrinsic value of an organic unity equals the sum of the intrinsic

values of its parts when they exist as part of the whole, but not when they exist independently.

²² If the Moorean wants to ascribe additional value to the Mona Lisa itself, he might ascribe what has been called “contributory value”. Roughly speaking, we might say that the contributory value of a part P, relative to a whole W, is the difference between the intrinsic value of W and the intrinsic value of W with P removed, discounting P’s intrinsic value. So in the case of the contemplation of the Mona Lisa, to determine the contributory value of the Mona Lisa (or perhaps of the existence of the Mona Lisa), you first sum the intrinsic values of the Mona Lisa and the contemplation, taken separately. Then you determine the intrinsic value of the organic unity consisting of the contemplation of the Mona Lisa. The difference between the two is the contributory value of the Mona Lisa (and also of the contemplation). So one difference between the Moorean and Conditional Views is that the Moorean View attributes contributory value to the Mona Lisa, while the Conditional View attributes intrinsic value. For more on contributory value, see Ross, 1930, p. 72; Lewis, 1955, p. 68; Gibbard, 1973; Bradley, 1998.

²³ See Moore, 1903, p. 214.

²⁴ For more on basic intrinsic value, see Harman (1967) and Feldman (2000). Also see chapter 3 of Ross (1930), where Ross makes the distinction between intrinsic value and “ultimate” value; ultimate value seems to be roughly the same thing as basic intrinsic value.

²⁵ See Hurka, 1998, pp. 308–309, where he discusses some of the potential difficulties for the conditional view. Also see Brentano, 1969, p. 115; Chisholm, 1986, pp. 70–71.

²⁶ We might also want to ascribe additional value to the parts of the whole. Recall (note 22 above) that the contributory value of a part P, relative to a whole W, is the difference between the intrinsic value of W and the intrinsic value of W with P removed, discounting P’s intrinsic value. Given this definition of contributory value, we find the contributory value of the contemplation of A in W1 by taking the intrinsic value of W1, or +30, and subtracting the sum of the intrinsic values of the contemplation of A (+10) and what is left of W1 when the contemplation of A is removed, or the contemplation of C (+10). Thus, the contemplation of A in W1 gets a contributory value of +10, as does the contemplation of C; thus, each has an *overall* value of +20.

²⁷ The account I present here is incompatible with a principle about basic intrinsic value that some find attractive. Fred Feldman holds that basics are non-overlapping; no basic entails any other basic (Feldman, 2000). Those who hold such a principle need to provide a different account of what happens in this example.

²⁸ See Bradley, 2001.

²⁹ See Chisholm, 1986, pp. 70–72.

³⁰ The summative principle I endorse is similar to one endorsed by Moore (1903, p. 214).

³¹ See Parfit, 1984, p. 388; Kagan and Vallentyne, 1994.

³² I thank an anonymous referee for suggesting this idea.

³³ At this point, the conditional view defender might reject CIV4 on the grounds that it does not allow the intrinsic value of a part to depend on the intrinsic value of the whole of which it is a part. For example, CIV4 rules out the possibility that the contemplation of A could have intrinsic value in virtue of the intrinsic value of the contemplation of A and C. But I do not think that conditional view defenders would actually argue in this way. Both Hurka and Kagan maintain that when something is intrinsically good, it is valuable “for its own sake” (Hurka, 1998; Kagan, 1998); but it seems that according to the proposed solution under discussion, the contemplation of A is valuable not entirely for its own sake, but at least in part for the sake of the larger whole consisting of the contemplation of A and C.

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