



The Concept and Debates in Intrinsic Value

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Abstract:

It is essential to argue that the concept of intrinsic value has crucial importance in ethics. There is a wide spectrum of morality. They have fundamentally good or terrible selves. We can begin to come to terms with concerns of virtue and vice, right and wrong, and so on by considering what we mean by intrinsic goodness and badness.

Keywords: paramount, goodness, intrinsic, ethics.

1. Introduction

Many ways philosophers try to clarify the concept of intrinsic value- sometimes from deontological way of explaining and sometimes from consequentialists' perception. Whatever the path of discussion, Human life always wants a good life in good environment and the major ethical theories recognize to promote what makes something good or what is that something that is intrinsic.

2. Plato, Aristotle and Kant

The concept of intrinsic value has been interpreted in many ways by various thinkers. Plato used the Sun as a metaphor for the Good. He maintained that both are of great worth, but that the Good is like the Sun in that it is too brilliant to look at directly with the naked eye or mind.

According to Plato, the essence of Goodness is the most difficult and final thing to comprehend in the cosmos of Knowledge. Realizing its existence leads one to the conclusion that it is the source of all that is good and just in the ancient world; in the visible world, it created light and the lord of light, and in the intelligible world, it created knowledge and truth. Without a vision like this, it's impossible to make good choices, whether personal or political.

Aristotle, in his Nicomechean Ethics², imagined good in different ways. It's reasonable to assume that there are different kinds of goodness. Of course, intrinsic goodness is the Chief Good (because there are other kinds of goodness, to use Aristotle's language). It appears that Aristotle is searching for the one item that, once obtained, makes all other goods superfluous. He says that happiness (which he strongly values) is the thing that, by itself, makes life pleasant and lacking in nothing, and that it is not recognised as one good thing among others since, if it were, the addition of even the last good would plainly make it more desired. The highest excellent is that which is already good. According to Aristotle, the Chief Good is an end in and of itself, meaning that it can never be compromised for the sake of other goods. The great Immanuel Kant himself used analogies. He believed it had intrinsic value since it was good in some fundamental way, even if its extrinsic value were to be zero due to the stingy supply of stepmotherly nature. Its inherent worth as a jewel-like object would still be readily apparent. Its utility is not in suggesting the item to experts or assessing its value, but in providing an atmosphere in which the item can be handled more comfortably in commercial contexts or by people who are not yet fans.³

1. G. E. Moore on intrinsic value

Principia Ethica⁴ of Moore argues that the concept of good, or what Moore subsequently terms intrinsic worth, is common and peculiar to all ethical judgements. There are just two kinds of ethical assertions



and inquiries. The first concerns questions of value: which entities ought to exist for their own sakes? And the other deals with morality: What sorts of deeds do we have a moral obligation to carry out? The central thesis of Principia is that second-order problems may be broken down into first-order ones. In other words, the question of what to do in a given situation comes down to asking which of several possible courses of action would be the most beneficial. Moore states, Obviously to assert that more good or less evil will exist in the world, if it be accepted than if anything else be done instead, is to assert that a particular course of conduct is, at a given time, absolutely appropriate or required.⁵ Moore contrasted his position with that of deontological intuitionists, who rely on gut feelings to answer concerns of right and wrong behaviour. According to Moore's consequentialist theory, duties and moral standards are topics for empirical investigation rather than direct objects of intuition, and can be determined by studying the repercussions of specific actions or types of activities. As Moore saw it, intuitions showed not whether or not a given action was right or wrong, but rather what kinds of things were desirable in and of themselves, as goals worthy of pursuit.

1. G. E. Moore attempts a more clear definition of the essential topic at stake whenever the 'subjectivity' of any value predicate is called into question.⁶ Moore claims that there are three main scenarios in which this debate arises.

2. When discussing ideas of right and evil, as well as the related idea of duty or what ought to be done,

3. Second, it is evident that ethics needs to deal with concepts of 'good' and 'evil,' in some meaning of those words, whose ideas for which they stand are certainly quite distinct from the conceptions of 'right' and 'wrong.'

4. Thirdly, in terms of aesthetic notions such as beautiful and ugly, or good and bad, as these are applied to works of art, and in which, consequently, the question of what is good and evil is a question not for ethics but for aesthetics.

G. E. Moore makes a distinction between intrinsic properties and intrinsic nature. If it is said that two things have different intrinsic properties or are intrinsically different then it means that they may be either numerically different or qualitatively different. On the other hand if it said that two things have different intrinsic natures then it means that they are qualitatively different (besides being numerically different). Thus if two things have different intrinsic nature then they are both qualitatively and quantitatively different. From what is said above, i.e., intrinsic difference (in nature) is not merely numerical difference; one should not hastily conclude that intrinsic difference (in nature) always implies qualitative difference. Although qualitative difference between two objects implies difference in their intrinsic natures, yet the converse is not true. Intrinsic difference may or may not mean qualitative difference. So, intrinsic difference may only mean quantitative difference. Two things may have different intrinsic natures in spite of being qualitatively alike; e.g., they may differ in respect of the degree in which they possess some quality. To take a concrete example: a very loud sound and a very soft sound – they are qualitatively alike and only quantitatively different. Thus, qualitative difference is only one species of intrinsic difference. We can notice here that Moore's way of distinguishing between intrinsic nature and intrinsic property is not clear. This is because the difference between intrinsic natures and intrinsic property (of two things) both implies either quantitative difference or qualitative difference. Moore speaks of two equivalent conditions for any value to be intrinsic: -

· If two or more things are exactly alike (having same qualities) and possess intrinsic value then they all possess intrinsic value in the same degree.



In all conditions and according to all causal rules, if two or more items share a particular degree of intrinsic worth, then they will share that value to the same degree. That is to say, even if these two goods existed in a parallel universe with causal laws that differ from our own, they would still be equally valuable.

He claims that the concept of intrinsic value is objective rather than subjective. Valuation by humans is not required for something to have intrinsic value. He differentiates between intrinsic worth and intrinsic characteristics. Intrinsic values include things like beauty, goodness, etc. (In Chapter 3 of *Principia Ethica* Moore argues that the existence of beauty apart from any awareness of it has intrinsic value, but in Chapter 6 he allows that beauty on its own at best has little and may have no intrinsic value⁷. He later tacitly rejects the concept of aesthetic perfection in his book *Ethics*⁸. However, characteristics like hue and saturation are instances of intrinsic properties. In contrast to other types of value predicates, intrinsic value predicates are in a class all their own. The nature of the thing itself is what determines whether or not it possesses an intrinsic property or an intrinsic worth. However, intrinsic worth and intrinsic property are not the same thing. The two are not the same. Intrinsic value has characteristics that are absent from intrinsic property. Moore, however, is unable to specify what it is. In the following sections, I will explain why John O'Neill disagreed with G.E. Moore's theory of intrinsic value.

Human beings evaluate things and event only when they take an interest. That is why a value relationship comes into picture where it did not exist before. In the process of evaluation, especially when the evaluation of nature is concerned, philosophers become interested in the properties or potentialities which are objective properties. The question, can moral values be assigned to these properties of nature leads to a debate and it generates an idea of ascribing instrumental value to nature. Some philosophers say that nature has intrinsic value which becomes more significant from different point of views including preservation of nature even if it is within human centred framework. But before addressing the debates that involve in intrinsic value, a clear concept of it and how it can be warranted needs to be understood.

Especially in the field of environmental ethics, the concept of intrinsic worth has long been regarded as the primary topic of dispute. We have already mentioned the various phrases used by philosophers to allude to such value, such as in itself, for its own sake, as such, and in its own right. Despite their relative lack of common usage, intrinsic value and inherent worth mean the same thing. The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition, defines The definition of the term intrinsic is of or relating to a thing's inherent nature or composition. When we say something has an inherent quality, we indicate that it is fundamental to its make-up or basic nature. The Latin root for value is *valere*, which means to be worth or to be strong, and the English word worth originates from the Middle English *weorth*, which means worthy or of value. A thing's value is said to be intrinsic if it has value beyond what it may be exchanged for since that value is part of the thing's essential essence or constitution.

Intrinsic value has a major bearing on the spectrum of moral judgments. An action is morally good or bad depending on whether or not its consequences are preferable to those of any other action one could take under the same set of circumstances, according to a minimalist variant of consequentialism. Many theories hold that the value of the results one might reasonably expect from one's actions determines the nature of those results, and therefore what is good and bad. In addition, if what one is morally responsible for doing is some function of the rightness or wrongness of what one does, as is widely claimed, then intrinsic value would seem relevant to assessments about responsibility, as well. It is commonly held that moral judgments (whether rights-based or desert-based) have some bearing on the



idea of intrinsic value, with the belief that things are good when justice is done and awful when it is denied. Virtues are good and vices are bad in ways that appear firmly related to such worth, yet it is widely believed that problems of intrinsic value are fundamental to assessments of moral virtue and vice.

Numerous theories of "intrinsic value" have been proposed. According to hedonism, for instance, only positive emotions have worth and negative ones have no meaning at all. There are many who believe that hedonism is flawed because it prioritises pleasure over other values, such as knowledge and justice. All the value at stake in this dispute, the parties agree, comes either directly from the subject matter or is derived from it. In certain cases, the definitions of fundamental terms include an implicit assumption of agreement on this point. In the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "intrinsic value" is defined as follows: something of intrinsic value; something of non-intrinsic value because of its connection to an intrinsic benefit.¹²

1. : Instrumental Value

Many authors make a distinction between something's intrinsic worth and its instrumental value, or the value it may have because it can be used to achieve other valuable items. Value contributions from others are permitted as well. The worth of a contributory good depends on the value of the whole to which it contributes; for example, a discordant chord in a symphony has value only because it is part of the whole. That intrinsic goods are to be contrasted with things that are extrinsically valuable and those that are necessary conditions of attaining intrinsic worth, is one way to put it. According to these points of view, if nothing had any intrinsic value, then nothing would have any value at all. However, one could argue that all value is only instrumental and that nothing has any true worth in and of itself.

We can assume that x has instrumental value to the extent that x is valuable because it may be instrumental in producing some other value. Or, to put it another way, something is said to be instrumentally valued if and only if it is appreciated for the role it plays or could play in facilitating the achievement of some other goal. The value of the result is not necessary for this definition.

Money has instrumental value because it can be used to buy other things, which we can assume even if we don't know what those things are or whether they have any intrinsic value at all. Many of these things have high instrumental value but low intrinsic value, including food, shelter, medical treatment, transportation, and clothing. Now, the experience of eating delicious food may have intrinsic value, and this helps explain why pleasant food is highly valued. If that's the case, monetary worth is only relative. Many philosophers, as we have seen, believe that instrumental value is always a derivative of what is hoped for.

potential worth or value on its own terms. We'll analyse whether or not this is a reasonable assumption below.

1. : Debates Concerning Intrinsic Value in Normative Ethics

Apart from G. E. Moore, I would like to put forward the arguments of R. M. Chisholm, Noah M. Lemos and John O' Neill in connection with the debates concerning intrinsic value in normative ethics.

Chisholm's View

In environmental ethics, there is a lot of talk about the difference between intrinsic and non-intrinsic value. This debate has been extensively researched and has been of major significance for environmental ethics from Plato through Aristotle, to Brentano, and on to Mill. These philosophers have assumed, without providing any evidence, that if something is good, then it must have an inherent or



essential quality that makes it so, and if something is bad, then it must have an inherent or essential quality that makes it so. However, Chisholm thinks that this distinction has been called into question much too often and has even descended into the absurd at times. Chisholm is interested in the condition that makes value intrinsic, so he first tries to define what intrinsic value is. This is what Chisholm means when he says that we should separate the circumstances under which something is valued into a separate category, and call the value that results from these circumstances extrinsic rather than intrinsic, since it depends on the circumstances.¹³ If a given condition is fundamentally good, then Chisholm holds that it must be so in all possible universes (or is true). An instrumentally beneficial condition of affairs, however, need not be such in every universe in which it is feasible.¹⁴ In this context, he notes that the idea of intrinsic worth can be broken down into components based on which components are preferred in and of themselves.

Noah M. Lemos' View

In the first chapter of his book *Intrinsic Value: Concept and Warrant*,¹⁵ Lemos aims to provide an in-depth explanation of Intrinsic Value by critiquing the perspectives of many philosophers. He explains that intrinsic value is such that it is explained in terms of the notions of ethically 'fitting' or needed emotional attitudes like love, hate, and preference, and he bases his analysis on the ideas of Franz Brentano, A. C. Ewing, and Roderick M. Chisholm. He discusses the more conventional understandings of value's foundation.

1. The first school of thought holds that anything cannot be inherently terrible if it is inherently good.
2. The concept of intrinsic value does not depend on any external factors.
3. The cognitivist position holds that there are inherently good and terrible things in the world.
4. There is no correlation between intrinsic worth and external factors.
5. Finally, the worth of an object has nothing to do with whether or not it is the target of a particular mental state.

Franz Brentano¹⁶, C D Broad¹⁷, A C Ewing, R M Chisholm¹⁸ believe that to love or enjoy something simply because it exists is to love or like it because it is wonderful in and of itself, for its own sake. This idea of inherent worth seems reasonable on the surface. Lemos also provides some counterarguments to these conventional wisdoms. The first criticism is that when we explain the concept of intrinsic worth in terms of an ethical requirement, we confuse intrinsic value with moral value. Second, it's unacceptable to value extrinsic qualities more than intrinsic ones. Thirdly, two additional points could be of equal worth on the surface, but one person's acceptable mood and perspective could be completely off-base for another.¹⁹

Lemos considers a variety of historical perspectives before expanding on the sources of value. Some traits are fundamentally desirable, he maintains, while others are intrinsically negative, citing the work of Panayot Butchvarov.²⁰ Things like joy and enlightenment have inherent value, whereas suffering and foolishness have the opposite. According to Chisholm, a person's state of affairs determines their worth.²¹ However, he contrasts this with the view of W. D. Ross, who he quotes as referring to reality as the source of ultimate worth. Lemos, however, after examining the aforementioned perspectives, reached a stand in accordance with Chisholm's. Some of his beliefs about nature and existence are metaphysical. He implies that neither pleasure nor absolute justice, both of which are abstract characteristics, are what really matter. Wisdom, joy, and beauty are all good making properties, in his



view.²² He adds that facts themselves can have moral weight; if it's true that someone is in agony, then that's an essentially evil fact; if it's true that someone is joyful, then that's an intrinsically good fact. The desire to suggest that some situations of affairs are value bearers is comprehensible if facts are states of affairs that obtain and facts are bearers of values. In doing so, he distinguished between realities and conditions. Values with intrinsic worth are not situational but rather universal. Specific examples lack inherent value because they lack a universal character. Complex things like situations of affairs or facts are required in order to determine if anything is inherently good or harmful.

John O'Neill's View

There are various meanings of intrinsic worth. The philosophical community is befuddled by the multiplicity of senses. The field of environmental ethics loses clarity when these different interpretations are lumped together. Here is how O'Neill explains these perceptions:²³

1. There is no practical use for intrinsic value. In this context, it is suggested that something has intrinsic worth if it may be valued for its own sake. It is suggested in the field of environmental ethics that entities other than humans and nations possess such non-instrumental worth. This is the main argument put out by Arne Naess in defence of deep ecology.

2. Possessing natural attributes is the second definition of intrinsic value. The concept speaks to the worth of something that cannot be created artificially. G. E. Moore provides further explanation of this position. O'Neill said, and Moore paraphrased, that when a value is said to be "intrinsic," it indicates that the question of whether or not an object possesses that value, and to what extent it does, depends only on the object's intrinsic character. An object's value is determined solely by its intrinsic property (or attributes), not by any other criteria. Valuers' mental states and how they relate to the valued thing is one such example. That is, we don't need to consider the existence or state of any other objects in order to define this value.

3. O'Neill also mentioned a third sense of the term: as a synonym for objective value. It suggests that the worth of anything exists apart from how people perceive it. In this context, the term intrinsic value might signify a few different things. This proposition is meta-ethical if (a) non-humans have intrinsic value. b) It disproves the idea that the preferences, affinities, etc., of the evaluators are the ultimate arbiters of worth.

The environmental ethicists, according to Neill, use the term intrinsic value in the first sense - non-humans are ends-in-themselves. However, in order to bolster their standing Environmental ethicists argue that intrinsic value might have more than one meaning. John O' Neill acknowledges the third and partly second senses of intrinsic value but rejects the first. An object has intrinsic value, in his view, if it serves as an aim in and of itself, rejecting the first notion (Moore's sense).

There are two varieties of objectivity to consider when assessing the second notion of value—intrinsic worth in the sense of objective value. Only in the strong sense, in Neill's view, can intrinsic worth be objective. In contrast to the non-anthropocentrists, he demonstrates that intrinsic worth can establish non-anthropocentrism if it is employed in the sense of the subjective value (as opposed to objective value). The first two of intrinsic value's three meanings are discussed.

First Sense

Moore believes that something's worth stems from what makes it unique. There is no inherent value hierarchy, and all objects are equally valuable. Second, an item's intrinsic value is something it always has and always will have. Neill contends that non-anthropocentrism cannot be established with such an



idea of intrinsic value. One's intrinsic essence or property is not dependent on any other factor. Neill defines non-relational property in two ways:²⁴

1. Properties that do not depend on the presence or absence of other objects are said to be non-relational.
2. Those properties that can be defined independently of their relationships to other objects are called non-relational.

According to Neill, non-anthropocentrism offers the following arguments to prove that nature has intrinsic value. The argument is:

- To hold environmental ethics is to hold that non-human natural objects have intrinsic value.
- There can be no such thing as a intrinsic value for the worth that objects have because of their relational features, such as their rarity.
- There was no room in a green morality for the worth things have because of the connections between them.

To better illustrate this point, consider the following scenario: Since an object's rarity is contingent on the absence of other things, its rarity cannot be defined independently of their existence. Rare things in our environment, such as endangered species, plants, animals, etc., are given more attention and protection these days. According to Neill, the natural things' scarcity gives them a higher worth than they would otherwise have. Therefore, environmental ethics, which gives nature worth in and of itself, has no room for such a concept. Non-relational properties give objects more worth on their own. All living things, including plants, animals, and everything else, possess unrelated qualities that give them inherent value.

Neill argues that the preceding argument makes a logical mistake by using equivocation. There are two meanings to the term intrinsic value. It means something different in each of the premises: non-instrumental worth in the first, and intrinsic value (in Moore's understanding) in the second. This is completely incorrect, as the two senses cannot be combined. Moorean intrinsic value encompasses both instrumental and non-instrumental worth, but not vice versa. The worth something has in and of itself is not the same thing (Moorean sense). Considering that it cannot be used to fulfil human needs, wilderness is an example of something with non-instrumental value. Wilderness, however, has value because it is undisturbed by humans, which is the same as arguing that wilderness has worth by virtue of its relation to humans, and hence cannot be considered to have intrinsic value (in the Moorean sense). Therefore, wilderness is not a property that exists in a vacuum; it has a relational property. Wilderness, though, is valuable in its own right. Consequently, there is a distinction between the notions of non-instrumental value and non-relational quality. Therefore, the foregoing argument commits the fallacy of equivocation since the phrase intrinsic value is used in different senses at different points. Therefore, the aforementioned reasoning fails. Wilderness does not have any inherent value from a Moorean perspective (as a non-relational feature). That environmental ethicists can't rely on first-order intrinsic value is demonstrated by Neill (Moorean sense).

Second Sense



Let's talk about Neill's take on whether or not the phrase intrinsic value can be employed in its alternative sense, where it refers to objective rather than subjective worth. When the worth of anything is determined by how someone else sees it, we say that it has subjective value. In other words, something X is only useful if an evaluator decides it is value. Contrarily, the importance of an evaluator is not factored into an objective value. In this context, whether or not a subject assigns value to X is irrelevant to its value. Whether or not X is valued by a subject, it nevertheless has value. That which is not created by humans has value in and of itself, according to those who think that intrinsic value and objective value are synonymous. Subjectivism, according to Neill, does not inevitably lead to anthropocentrism. The subjectivist claims that human judgments are the only reliable basis for worth. However, this does not imply that humans are the only things of ultimate value. To back up his claim, Neill appeals to Emotivism.

Intrinsic value is non-instrumental value, according to emotivist C.L.Stevenson. Good as an end in itself, or intrinsically good, is distinct from good as a means to an aim. He believes that saying X is fundamentally excellent shows that the speaker approves of X on its own merits and uses emotional appeal to persuade the listener or listeners to share this view.²⁵ Neill claims that this 'X' can very well be non-human entity instead of being only human attitudes. An emotivist believes that ecosystem has intrinsic value and acts emotively, e.g., expresses her joy in the existence of natural ecosystem, whereas expresses her pain in the destruction of nature by humans. Thus, nature has intrinsic value according to this view.

Some may object, still, that emotivism does not support environmental ethics. Since, humans are the only source of value, a world without humans (even in the presence of non-human) would have no value at all. Neill's rejoinder is that emotivism does not confine moral utterances only to the periods in which human exists, e.g., an emotivist can express his joyous mood in saying Wilderness exist

²⁵Stevenson, C. L; (1994) Ethics and Language ,New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 16

after the extinction of human species. Thus, subjectivism does not support anthropocentrism. In fact, subjectivism can establish non-anthropocentrism by attributing intrinsic value to nature.

However, objectivism fails as a viable theoretical framework for establishing that nature is valuable in and of itself. Value, according to the objectivist view, is independent of subjective human valuations. They don't give any details about what kinds of things are considered valuable on their own merits. This something might, therefore, refer to either humans or human attitudes. Thus, anthropocentrism and objectivism can coexist. For anthropocentrism holds that things outside of humanity have no worth in and of themselves. The objectivists maintain that an object's evaluative features are, in fact, genuine properties, meaning that they exist apart from the opinions of observers (humans).

- independent of the evaluations of evaluators and actual property are both terms that Neill uses to describe a concept with multiple meanings.

- According to the weak interpretation, an object's evaluative features are those that persist even in the absence of evaluative agents. Alternatively, we might say that an attribute is real if it persists while no sentient being is present to see it.

- In contrast, according to the strong interpretation, evaluative qualities of objects can be described independently of the individuals doing the evaluating. Alternatively, we might say that a real property is one that can be described independently of any particular experience.

Strong objectivity is accorded if real property is interpreted narrowly, while narrow objectivity is accorded if real property is interpreted broadly. While he denies that lack of objectivity can indicate



that nature lacks intrinsic value, he does concede that strong objectivity can establish the value of non-humans.

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