

# Objective Purposiveness and Extrinsic Final Value

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## PLAN:

- (1) propose an alternative Kantian approach to extrinsic final value, namely the value we attribute to an object for its own sake due to its extrinsic features
- (2) explore the merits of the approach in relation to extant views, Christine Korsgaard's and Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen's (R&R hence forth).

Christine Korsgaard (1983) introduced the notion of extrinsic final value in “Two Distinctions in Goodness”:

- Do we value objects for their own sake due to their extrinsic features?

Korsgaard: **The Desire-First Approach** to Extrinsic Final Value

- Kant's moral writings

ME: **The Value-First Approach** to Extrinsic Final Value

- KU (esp. passages on different kinds of objective purposiveness)
- Different kinds of objective purposiveness map onto different kinds of values, including intrinsic final value and extrinsic instrumental value. Within this framework, I carve out a space for extrinsic final value.
- Two merits of the Value-First Approach:
  - (1) Korsgaard's Desire-First Approach has faced criticism for its commitment to subjectivism. The Value-First approach is neutral with respect to the subjectivism-objectivism debate.
  - (2) The Value-First approach provides a compelling alternative to R&R (2000, “A Distinction in Value: Intrinsic and for Its Own Sake”). It provides a more straightforward response to the question of when extrinsic qualities of an object count as reasons for its final value (e.g. why the fact that a dress has been worn by Princess Diana count as a reason for us to value it for its own sake).

## KORSGAARD'S DESIRE-FIRST APPROACH

What is extrinsic final value?

Two distinctions about value:

- (1) The distinction between final and instrumental value
  - o The distinction is about *the way things have value*.
  - o The distinction concerns the manner in which we value things.

We attribute **final value** to things when we value them **for their own sakes**.

Things have **instrumental value** if we value them **for the sake of something else**.

- (2) The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value
  - The distinction is about *the way we value things*.
  - The distinction concerns the source of things' value.

**Intrinsic value** is the value something **has in itself**.

**Extrinsic value** is the value a thing **has from another source**.

According to Korsgaard, philosophers often contrasted intrinsic value with instrumental value, thereby overlooking the possibility of value that is neither intrinsic nor instrumental, namely the possibility of **extrinsic final value**.

- Things that are neither intrinsically nor instrumentally valuable, such as “mink coats and handsome china and gorgeously enameled frying pans” (185).

Korsgaard's agenda:

- A peculiar kind of Kantian subjectivist theory of value
- Things have value only because we value them, we desire them (hence the title “the Desire-First Approach.”)
- The fact that we value things confers value upon them because we ourselves are intrinsically valuable. So most of the things we value only have extrinsic value, i.e., the value derived from the fact that we value them.

Criticism of Korsgaard:

- Korsgaard's conception of “source” as ambiguous (R&R, “A Distinction in Value,” 36-37 and Rønnow-Rasmussen, *The Value Gap*, 16)
  - The source of an object's value confers value to the object or constitutes its value. It is not clear which.
- Korsgaard's account requires you to take sides on the subjectivism/objectivism debate (namely, whether value is objective or subjective).
  - Her account can work only if subjectivism is true: Too demanding.

How can we redefine intrinsic and extrinsic value (and thereby extrinsic final value) in more neutral terms without entangling ourselves with the “source” talk, which turns out to be loaded with presuppositions and vagueness?

## R&R SUPERVENIENCE ACCOUNT

- The extrinsic/intrinsic value distinction should be about a value's supervenience base (Rønnow-Rasmussen, *The Value Gap*, 8-9).
- An object has **intrinsic value** if its value **supervenes exclusively on its internal properties**.
- An object has **extrinsic value** if its value **supervenes on its extrinsic properties** (to relational features that are external to the bearer of value).
- **Extrinsic final value** = “an object's being finally valuable amounts to its being valuable for its own sake... because of some of its externally relational features” (Rønnow-Rasmussen (2015), “Intrinsic and Extrinsic Value,” 34).

**Question:** Why does Princess Diana's dress have extrinsic final value?

**R&R:** Princess Diana's dress has final value partly because Diana wore it.

**Possible objection:** Princess Diana's dress has merely instrumental value, namely, it is valuable as a means to establish a connection with someone we admire or find important.

**R&R:** "e[E]ven if the desire to establish such an 'affiliation' with Diana may well be a part of the causal explanation of our evaluative attitude towards the dress, this does not imply that the evaluative attitude itself is of the instrumental kind: if we idolise Diana, we do not simply find the dress useful for some purpose; we ascribe an independent value to it" ("A Distinction in Value", 41)

**Problem:** R&R arrive at final value via instrumental value. The dress has no use for some purpose; voilà, it must have final value. No direct answer to the question why the dress has final value.

**My suggestion:** Let's look at Kant's description of various kinds of objective purposiveness in the KU to get a clear answer to the question of extrinsic final value.

- Different types of purposiveness map onto different kinds of value.
- What makes those passages so relevant to the value debate is that the supervenience sense of intrinsic and extrinsic value distinction nicely fits with the Kantian picture drawn in §15.
  - o Also, adopting the supervenience sense means avoiding the confusion and ambiguity attached to Korsgaard's Desire-First Approach.

## THE VALUE-FIRST APPROACH

### What is purposiveness?

- "purpose" or "end" = the object of a concept where the concept is the cause of the existence of the object (KU, AA 05: 220).
- "purposiveness" = the causality that concepts (the representations of a purpose) have when they function as (part of) the cause of the existence of a corresponding object.
  - o Purposiveness of the concept of an object --- if the concept has the causality to produce the object.
  - o Purposiveness of an object --- when the object is subsumable under the concept that figured in its cause.
  - o Purposiveness in the case of the intentional production of objects
    - the concept of an object acts as a cause in a producer's mind to bring about the object.

Abstract from such a mind and focus only on the causal relation of a concept and its object, arrive at Kant's **general definition of purposiveness**

- organisms
- beauty

### What is objective purposiveness?

- a type of purposiveness that requires an end

- “can be recognized only by means of the relation of the manifold to a determinate end, thus only through a concept” (KU, AA 05: 226).

### Objective purposiveness:

1. **External** --- accidental perfection = extrinsic instrumental value
  - It concerns the utility or the usefulness of the object (KU, AA 05: 226)
  - We judge the object on the basis of a concept concerning the use of the object
  - The catch: the purpose that is assigned is **not** the purpose the object *ought* to serve.
  - Presupposes a concept of what the object happens to be
  - The purposiveness is regarded to be relative because it is “contingent in the thing itself to which it is ascribed” (KU, AA 05: 368)
  - E.g. decorating one’s clothing with colorful bird feathers, painting oneself with colored soils or juices of plants (KU, AA 05: 369), ice cream lid as a Frisbee
  - Mediate satisfaction
2. **Internal**
  - a. **Qualitative** --- qualitative perfection = intrinsic final value<sup>1</sup>
    - “Now as an end in general is that the **concept** of which can be regarded as the ground of the possibility of the object itself, thus in order to represent an objective purposiveness in a thing the concept of **what sort of thing it is supposed to be** must come first; and the agreement of the manifold in the thing with this concept (which supplies the rule for the combination of the manifold in it) is the **qualitative perfection** of a thing” (KU, AA 05: 227).
    - A report on whether an object is good of its kind, and it has the form “this is good” or “this is perfect.”
    - Presupposes a concept of what the object *ought* to be, i.e., a kind concept such as the concept of a paper cutter, a dress, a dog, etc.
      - the kind concept allows us to identify the intrinsic/internal properties of the object supposed to have and the intrinsic/internal purposes it is supposed to serve<sup>2</sup>
      - not just one kind concept: “one thing can have several qualitative perfections” (MS, AA 06: 386).
        - One can judge a dress on the basis of the concept of a dress, a summer dress, or a silk dress. Correspondingly, the internal/intrinsic end that is assigned to the dress can change.

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<sup>1</sup> Here I refer to a specific type of intrinsic final value, a subset, so to speak. There are other types of judgments that attribute intrinsic final value to objects, the moral judgment being one and the judgment of taste being the other. For instance, the good will has unconditional intrinsic final value but that value has been attributed to it *via* a moral judgment not a judgment of perfection (GMS, AA 04: 395). I will not be discussing that type of intrinsic final value as it has no direct bearing on my construction of a Kantian approach to extrinsic final value. I want to make it clear that when I say “intrinsic final value” I am talking solely about the kind that is attributed *via* a judgment of perfection.

<sup>2</sup> I take what Kant means by “internal” and what contemporary philosophers mean by “intrinsic” more or less the same thing.

- b. **Quantitative** --- quantitative perfection = empty quantitative (or ontological) perfection that takes *to be a thing* and *to be an end* as identical is nonsensical, “merely a childish game played with words instead of concepts” (KU, AA 05: 394).

### **Making a judgment of qualitative perfection involves certain steps:**

- (1) Classify the object O under kind K by observing the properties O has.
- (2) Get access to its intrinsic purpose
- (3) Determine what types of properties are required to serve this purpose and how they should be unified
- (4) Set expectations
- (5) Check whether or not O meets these expectations by comparing our representation of O to all the other representations that are associated with K.
  - o We are not, of course, comparing representations one by one. Instead, we are comparing our representation of O to a model or archetype.
  - o Since perfection can be thought of only relationally, “[i]n all perfection what matters is always that one has before one’s eyes a purpose, a model, a proto- and an archetype. Regarding this, one can properly judge, and say whether one thing, and which thing, is more perfect than another” (V-Lo/Blomberg, AA 24: 50).
  - o This model is tantamount to an average idea of an organization of multiple properties that is formed through various encounters with objects we placed under the same kind concept (e.g. aussies, vacuum cleaners, etc).
  - o When I claim, “this is a perfect/good vacuum cleaner,” what I do is to compare this vacuum cleaner with the idea of an average vacuum I have in mind. The same goes with an aussi.

### **Why qualitative perfection is intrinsic final value?**

- The properties that their value supervenes on are internal to these objects.
- The end according to which we judge these objects are their own end, not some other end.
- The satisfaction we feel is not mediated, unlike in the case of external objective purposiveness. It is immediate; it is in the object (KU, AA 05: 241).

### **Where does extrinsic final value fit in within this picture?**

- Korsgaard’s examples of extrinsic final value, like mink coats, turn out to have intrinsic final value not extrinsic final value.
- Why the fact that a dress has been worn by Princess Diana counts as a reason for us to value it for its own sake?

Whether Diana’s dress has extrinsic final value depends on what kind of a dress this is.

- (1) **the D-Dress:** The dress worn by Diana that was exclusively designed for her to wear
  - o Having been worn by Princess Diana is not extrinsic but an intrinsic property of the D-Dress.
- (2) **the P-Dress:** The dress worn by Diana that was picked from a pile
  - o The P-Dress has extrinsic final value.

- When valued as Diana's dress, the P-Dress is no longer valued as a dress that fits under the concept of dressness.
- The P-Dress after having been worn by Diana, was transformed: not a particular or a token but a singular or singleton
- **It has final value** because it is valued as a singular object for its own sake, for its uniqueness, with no reference to any purpose.
  - It has extrinsic value because being worn by Diana was never its purpose.
  - Just like the colorful bird feathers or the ice cream lid discussed earlier, its value-making properties are extrinsic to it.
- **It does not have instrumental value** because in virtue of being singled out, it ceased to have any associations with other purposes for which it can serve as means.

### Why call it the Value-First Approach?

- My alternative Kantian model does not construe "end" as the desired end of an object in the way Korsgaard did.
- In my alternative Kantian account, "ends" are dictated by the concepts of objects.
- Within this framework, when one says that the object is objectively purposive for a concept X, they are not saying that they desire the object. Instead, they should be interpreted as saying that the objective purposiveness of the object for the concept X might give us reasons for desiring it. So, desire in my account does not precede value.

Value comes first.