

On Hatzimoysis on Sentimental Value

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Abstract Despite its apparent ubiquity, philosophers have not talked much about sentimental value. One exception is Anthony Hatzimoysis (The Philosophical Quarterly 53:373–379, 2003). Those who wish to take sentimental value seriously are likely to make use of Christine Korsgaard’s ideas on two distinctions in value. In this paper I show that Hatzimoysis has misrendered Korsgaard’s insight in his discussion of sentimental value. I begin by briefly summarising Korsgaard’s idea before showing how Hatzimoysis’ treatment of it is mistaken.

Keywords Sentimental value · Korsgaard · Final value

Korsgaard’s Two Distinctions

In her landmark article—‘Two Distinctions in Goodness’ (Korsgaard 1983)—Christine Korsgaard points out that the customary way in which philosophers contrast intrinsic and instrumental value is highly misleading. This is because the proper contrast to something good as a means to something else that is good (instrumental value), is something good for its own sake (final value). And, on its own, this says nothing about whether things which are good for their own sake are so in virtue of their intrinsic properties alone. Similarly, the proper contrast to the value a thing has which is grounded in its intrinsic features (intrinsic value) is the value it has which is grounded in its extrinsic features (extrinsic value). In light of this, it is possible that things may be good for their own sake—or have final value—on at least partly relational (extrinsic) grounds. But even if this turns out to be false (so all final value is intrinsic value and vice versa), this result certainly is not implied

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by the term ‘intrinsic value’ and must, as Korsgaard (1983) argues, rest upon a substantive position.¹

Hatzimoysis

The theoretical space opened up by Korsgaard’s distinction is interesting in its own right but it is also very useful for the philosophical recognition of new types of value. One such type is sentimental value.² Unfortunately, Hatzimoysis (2003) goes awry in using what is a crucial insight by Korsgaard to further the credentials of sentimental value.

Hatzimoysis (2003: 377) says that he will state briefly his ‘main worry with a particular version’ of what he calls ‘the liberal analysis’—the claim that not all final value is intrinsic value—in order to show how it is prone to ‘misrepresenting the nature of sentimental value’.³ We might have reason to be nervous about a methodology that involves attacking a particular version without any indication of whether the attack generalises, and rightly so in this case. Hatzimoysis (2003) correctly presents the liberal as claiming that final value can be held in virtue of non-intrinsic properties. He (Hatzimoysis 2003: 377) then mentions some possible examples of such non-intrinsic final value that are discussed by Korsgaard (1983: 185), those of mink coats, handsome china, and gorgeously enamelled frying pans.⁴ It is important to note that in introducing the examples, Korsgaard (1983: 185) says that ‘[i]t is equally absurd to say of such a thing that that it is a mere instrument, just because its value is conditioned’. She then adds that the two distinctions outlined above:

allow us to say that the coat is valued in part for its own sake, although only under certain conditions. It even allows us to say of certain kinds of thing, such as luxurious instruments, that they are valued for their own sakes under the condition of their usefulness.

Korsgaard finishes the point by saying that ‘[m]ink coats and handsome china and gorgeously enameled frying pans are all things that human beings might choose for their own sakes under the condition of their instrumentality[.]’ Clearly this is only one particular example of an extrinsic property—usefulness—affecting the final value of objects. Hatzimoysis (2003: 377), however, cites Korsgaard’s examples, along with the claim that such objects are valued for their own sakes under the condition of their

¹ Kagan (1998) pursues the same line.

² The meaning of ‘sentimental’ here is its everyday and pre-theoretical one (the one commonly referred to on *Antiques Roadshow*), rather than the one in the sentimentalist tradition in metaethics.

³ In the sentence this quotation comes from the charge of misrepresentation is also levelled at what Hatzimoysis calls the ‘orthodox view’—the view that all final value is intrinsic value and vice versa.

⁴ Hatzimoysis (2003: 377) presents his quotation thus ‘(Korsgaard, p. 264)’ and suggests that it is from the original appearance of the article in *The Philosophical Review*. Given that the page numbers of its appearance there are 169–195, this must be a mistake. His page reference to the example corresponds to its appearance in Korsgaard’s (1996) *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, so I assume that this is where the quotation is in fact taken from.

usefulness, and says that Korsgaard's observation 'can be taken in a way that plays into the hands of an opponent'. His explanation is thus:

if those objects are chosen primarily as a means of keeping oneself warm, serving tea or cooking chips, then their value is above all instrumental. At best, this view renders the final value of objects parasitic on their usefulness. It would thus, without any argument, preclude sentimental value from counting as a type of final value: as I have noted already, some emotionally valuable objects, from broken ivory combs to sea pebbles, are things that have ceased to serve, if they ever had, a useful purpose.

I think that there are three problems with what Hatzimoysis says here.

First, it is unclear what it means to say that the value of these objects is *above all* instrumental. If it means 'merely' then it is just a denial, without argument, of Korsgaard's claim. If, however, it means 'conditioned upon' then it is simply a redundant reaffirmation of Korsgaard's point.

Second, Korsgaard is only presenting one type of extrinsic property that one type of object (functional objects) may need to have in order to be finally valuable on non-intrinsic grounds, (as part of her general aim to show how a type of Kantian axiology is closed out by the traditional (Moorean) intrinsic/instrumental distinction). Clearly her aim is to show how functional items can have non-instrumental value despite this value being conditioned upon their usefulness. Nowhere does she say that *all* objects which hold final value on partly extrinsic grounds must do so in virtue of having the property of being useful.

Third, Hatzimoysis chooses only *one particular* substantive position which is opened up by the liberal position and it is an irrelevant target. But what was Hatzimoysis' point supposed to show? The liberal position can recognise a whole host of extrinsic properties that different types of object would have to hold in order to be finally valuable. These might include: usefulness, rarity, and historical significance. And another type, of course, are those relevant to sentimental value—(say) those of having belonged to, having been given by, or having being used by, particular people (or animals). It is unclear why Hatzimoysis does not see or discuss this possibility.

Sentimental Value and Final Value

In Hatzimoysis' article, he makes another claim about the nature of sentimental value which reflects a misunderstanding of the liberal analysis on his part. He (Hatzimoysis 2003: 379) says that:

A concluding remark is due on whether sentimental value is 'final'. A sentimentally valuable object is valuable not for the sake of something else, but for its own sake. The 'for its own sake' idiom is usually rendered in a single word as 'final'; but this rendering can be misleading. Sentimental value does not signify the *final* point of any activity, nor can it lay a claim to be among the *ultimate* constituents of human well-being...I propose that the notion appropriate to express this aspect of sentimentally valuable objects should be 'complete value'.

Pace Hatzimoysis, it is not misleading to say that sentimental value is a type of final value. This is because, in this context, ‘final’ does not, as he suggests, mean that the value is either ‘the final point of activity’ or among ‘the ultimate constituents of human well-being’. Rather, as used by Korsgaard (1983) and other liberals, ‘final’, like ‘for its own sake’, simply denotes the opposite of instrumental value (where this leaves open whether such value is in virtue of its intrinsic properties alone). As Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2000: 48) put the point (in a paper that Hatzimoysis (2003: 377) cites):

While a “sake” may be an end, a non-propositional object can’t be, even when it is valued for its own sake. Still, whereas “value as an end” is for this reason misleading, the relevant values can be said to be “end-point values”, *insofar as they are not simply conducive to or necessary for something else that is of value. They are “final”, then, in this sense of being “ultimate”*. (My italics).

Of course, as the so-called ‘wrong-kind-of-reasons’ problems show, believers in non-intrinsic final value must supply an analysis of ‘for its own sake’ or ‘final’ that is not only invulnerable to ‘evil demon’ type objections but is also not simply ‘in virtue of its intrinsic properties’.⁵ But this is by-the-by here.

In conclusion, Hatzimoysis (2003) has misrendered the liberal analysis of final value, and obstructed the recognition of sentimental value as a genuine kind of final value, in two ways. First he has attacked only a particular and irrelevant instance of the liberal analysis of final value. Korsgaard and other liberals about final value can allow any number of extrinsic properties to be the grounds of final value, including those relevant to sentimental value. They need not ground all non-intrinsic final value in the extrinsic property of usefulness and to suggest that they do is to greatly misconstrue Korsgaard’s (1983) insight. Hatzimoysis (2003) also misrepresents the liberal analysis generally by suggesting that the ‘final’ in ‘final value’ signifies the ultimate ends of actions or constituents of human well-being. This is not what the ‘final’ in ‘final value’ means here. Sentimental value might not be an ultimate end of action, or among the ultimate constituents of human well-being, but this does not prevent it from being properly regarded as final value.

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⁵ See, for example, Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004) and Stratton-Lake (2005).