

Chapter 9.

Ethics: The Goods

What is good? Brentano's *formal* answer is: that toward which it is fitting to take a pro attitude. But one may ask the question hoping also for a *material* answer. In other words: toward which things is it fitting to take a pro attitude? Brentano's normative ethics offers an answer to this question. At the heart of his answer is a list of *four* things which are good in and of themselves. Abruptly put, they are: (i) conscious activity, (ii) pleasure, (iii) knowledge, and (iv) fitting attitudes. Everything else is good only insofar as it is instrumental in bringing about one of these four intrinsic goods. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a fuller critical exposition of this ethical system.

1. Consequentialism and the Structure of Ethical Theory

I have mentioned in Chap. 5 the organizing questions of ethics and metaethics. The ethicist asks: What is good? The metaethicist asks: What does it mean to say that something is good? I have noted, however, that these organizing questions do not quite *exhaust* ethics and metaethics. The latter is concerned also, for example, with questions about the basis and justification of moral knowledge. As for the former, a further question normative ethics must tackle can be summarized succinctly: *What to do?* That is, what are we supposed to do in, and with, our lives? This is a question not about what things are *good*, but about what actions are *right*, or what ends it is right for us to pursue. Brentano writes:

How did we define ethics? We said it was that practical discipline which teaches us about the highest end (*Zweck*) and the choice of means for it. (Brentano 1952: 88 [55])

Here ‘practical discipline’ should be thought of on the model of engineering: a discipline whose proper knowledge is knowledge-*how*, and whose body of knowledge-that is subservient to that knowledge-*how*.

Although the question Brentano attempts to address concerns the right rather than the good, his *answer* to the question is given in terms of the good: to a first approximation, what is right is to maximize the good. In a slogan, ‘the right end consists in the best of what is attainable’ (1952: 134 [84]). Or in a more verbose statement:

When is a decision directed upon the right end? The answer reads: when the best among what is attainable is chosen. (1952: 220-1 [138]; see also 1889: 30 [32])

Different courses of action lead to different results – different *states of affairs*, we might say for the sake of convenience (while not forgetting that Brentano denies the existence of states of affairs). These states of affairs are to be evaluated in terms of their relative goodness – some will be better than others, and one (at least) will be best among them. But in every situation, some states of affairs are *attainable* and some are *unattainable*. That is to say: for some, there is an available course of action that will result in them; for others, there is not. Focusing now on those states of affairs for which a course of action is available that will result in them, they too can be evaluated for their relative goodness – some attainable states of affairs are better than others, and one (at least) is best. It is this state of affairs, the best among the attainable ones in a given circumstance, that is the right end for action in that circumstance. That is:

(RIGHT) For any agent A, course of action C, and time *t*, C is the right course of action for A at *t* iff there is no course of action C*, such that (i) C* is available to A at *t* and (ii) C* would bring about a state of affairs better than the state of affairs C would bring about.

Thus the right, although in the first instance more central to ethics as a ‘practical discipline,’ is ultimately understood in terms of the good (or rather in terms of the *better*).

A few clarifications of RIGHT might be useful. First, in some circumstances, there may be a small group of attainable states of affairs which are equally good and better than all others; Brentano appears to hold that ethical theory is neutral on which among them one ought to pursue. We might say that they are all *permissible* within his ethical theory. If so, RIGHT is really an account of *a* right action rather than *the* right action. Secondly, for the purposes of understanding RIGHT, we should take complete inaction to be a course of action always available to the agent; if all action would result in a state of affairs worse than the status quo, inaction would be the right ‘course of action.’ Thirdly, it is far from obvious what it means to say that a course of action is *available* to an agent, and accordingly that a state of affairs is *attainable* by her. Thus a Brentanian ethic must be supplemented with an analysis of these notions.¹ Fourthly, there is a clear sense in which RIGHT presents a consequentialist account of right action: the value of an action is fixed by the value of its consequences. As Brentano puts it, ‘if anyone wants to call [RIGHT] a utilitarian principle, he is free to do so’ (1952: 223 [139]; see also 1889: 31 [33]). Finally, although RIGHT is formulated in terms of *states of affairs*, we must keep in mind that in Brentano’s reism there are no states of affairs; instead, there are special kinds of individual. So, there is no such thing as the state of affairs of the trolley hitting a fat man, but only the individual fat-man-hitting trolley; it is this special individual that bears whatever amount of intrinsic value we are inclined to assign to the corresponding state of affairs. I will continue to conduct the discussion in terms of states of affairs, to avoid an unnecessary cognitive tax on the reader. (I find it unnatural to think of these matters in terms of the bringing into or taking out of existence of special individuals, and assume it is the same with the reader.)



The rightness of actions is fixed by the goodness of their consequences, then. But in many cases, the goodness of the consequences is itself fixed by the goodness of *their* consequences. It is right to brush one’s teeth because the consequence of doing so is having healthy teeth, and having healthy teeth is good; but having healthy teeth is good because the consequence of having healthy teeth is that one can eat more

easily in old age, which is itself good; and this latter is good because it has for likely consequence better nourishment. Ultimately, however, some things must be good *in and of themselves*, so that all other good things may derive their goodness from them, in virtue of having them as consequences.

On this picture, there are two very different ways for something to be good. Some things are good *derivatively*, i.e. in virtue of their consequences, while other things are good *intrinsically*, irrespective of their consequences. Crucially, the former's goodness is asymmetrically dependent on the latter's. For what constitutes the derivative goodness of a thing is not just the *existence* of its consequences, but their *goodness*. We might summarize the point as follows:

(GOOD) For any x , x is good iff either (a) x is intrinsically good or (b) there is a y , such that (i) y is intrinsically good and (ii) y is a consequence of x .

GOOD accounts for goodness in terms of intrinsic goodness plus the consequence relation. Since consequence is a nonnormative notion, intrinsic goodness is the only basic normative notion here. The key normative question becomes, then, What is intrinsically good?

Note, however, that this 'account' of goodness is not substantive so much as analytic: it is an attempt to put order in the conceptual interrelations among various normative notions, not (yet) a contentful injunction to do this or that. We may thus call an ethics based on the combination of RIGHT and GOOD *analytic consequentialism*. According to analytic consequentialism, it is in some sense *trivial* that most actions and states of affairs are evaluated in terms of their consequences. But ultimately, some of these consequences must be evaluated intrinsically, on their own merit so to speak. One obtains a substantive, contentful ethics by taking on substantive commitments about what has intrinsic value or merit; that is, by adopting a specific 'table of goods' (*Gütertafel*) (Brentano 1952: 171 [104]).

First-generation utilitarians such as Bentham had a very simple table of goods, featuring only one item: pleasure. When you plug this table into the

conjunction of RIGHT and GOOD, you get hedonic consequentialism: the injunction to act in such a way as to maximize the occurrence of pleasure in the world. For Brentano, however, there is no reason to expect there to be just one ultimate good. Pleasure *is* an intrinsic good, he concedes, but only one among several. To that extent, his is a *pluralistic* analytic consequentialism.²

What might tempt one to claim that pleasure is the *only* intrinsic good? Bentham (1789) thought that this followed from *psychological* hedonism, the claim that all action is ultimately motivated by desire for pleasure and aversion to pain. In Brentano's hands, the reasoning becomes this: 1) only pleasure can be loved; therefore, a fortiori, 2) only pleasure can be *fittingly* loved; 3) the good is that which can be fittingly loved; therefore, 4) only pleasure is good. Brentano rejects the first premise in this argument. His main argument against it is the following:

Were nothing but pleasure loveable, it would mean that every love would have love for an object; however, the loved love would then have to be again directed at a love – and so on ad infinitum! No, for there to be pleasure at all, something other than pleasure must be loveable (1952: 179 [113])

Pleasure, like all other conscious states, is for Brentano an intentional state. Accordingly, it must be directed at some object. At the same time, pleasure is a species of love (that is, of a pro attitude). So whenever a pleasure occurs, a love state occurs that is directed at some object. At what object? Well, if only pleasure could be loved, it would mean that every pleasure has pleasure as its object. This leads to infinite regress, notes Brentano. In addition, we can note, it seems patently false: sometimes we take pleasure in an ice cream, or are pleased by a football game. Indeed, *most* pleasures are pleasures in things other than pleasure. The point is that psychological hedonism (Premise 1 in the above argument for hedonic consequentialism) appears to presuppose a non-intentionalist account of pleasure. Once one adopts the view that pleasure is an intentional state, psychological hedonism becomes exceedingly implausible.

Not only is there no good reason to expect pleasure to be the only good, then, there is good reason to expect there to be other goods. This aligns nicely with what our moral intuition instructs. Imagine two possible worlds very much like our own, and like each other, but for a very private stretch of thirty seconds in human history. At the beginning of this stretch, Hitler sits alone in his bunker and drinks poison that he knows will take thirty seconds to kill him; he spends the last thirty seconds of his life lying back and reflecting. In one of the two worlds, he spends those thirty seconds in utter glee and pride over all that he had accomplished. In the other, he is suddenly visited by the horrific realization of what he had done, and is tortured by an intense sense of shame, regret, and self-hatred. Hedonic consequentialism returns the verdict that the first world is the morally better of the two, the one we should hope is more similar to the actual world. But moral intuition is firm in its opposite verdict: that the second world is the morally superior, involving as it does the slightest measure of redemption.

2. Brentano's Table of Goods

In this section, I present Brentano's specific list of intrinsic goods (§2.1) and discuss various objections to them – that is, various suggestions for lengthening and/or shortening the list (§2.2).

2.1. The Table

As noted, Brentano is happy to concede that pleasure is an intrinsic good. Given Brentano's metaethics, to say that pleasure is an intrinsic good is to say that it is fitting to adopt a pro attitude toward pleasure. More specifically, it is to say that anyone who adopted (what I called in Chap. 8) a self-imposing attitude toward pleasure, would adopt a *pro* attitude. And indeed, when we contrast our actual pro attitude toward pleasure and joy and con attitude toward pain and suffering with an imagined emotional set-up that involves a pro attitude toward pain and sorrow and

a con attitude toward pleasure and joy, the former strikes us as preferable in a self-imposing sort of way. Thus pleasure is, qua pleasure, always and everywhere a good (Brentano 1889: 85 [90]).³

Importantly, for Brentano not all pleasures are *equally* intrinsically good. A pleasure taken in helping a blind person cross the street is more intrinsically valuable (has greater intrinsic goodness to it) than a(n equal) pleasure taken in torturing kittens for profit. The reason is that the former is a *fitting* pleasure whereas the latter is an *unfitting* pleasure; the right attitude to take toward kitten-torture is that of *displeasure*, not that of pleasure.

The overall intrinsic value of a fitting pleasure is in this picture a sum of the value of pleasure and the value of pleasure-fittingness, which means that pleasure-fittingness is another intrinsic good, in addition to pleasure. The fittingness of pleasure is, however, just a special case of the fittingness of any state of ‘interest’ or emotion:

... all emotions with the character of correctness/fittingness are good in and of themselves. This holds of love and hatred in all forms. So for example a noble pain, say about the victory of injustice, ... is valuable in itself. (1952: 186 [118])

Fitting pain taken in extrajudicial execution of African-Americans by US police is an intrinsic bad insofar as it is a pain, but also an intrinsic good insofar as it is a fitting interest state. Its *overall* intrinsic value is a function of the intrinsic good arising from the state’s fittingness and the intrinsic bad arising from the state’s painfulness. This raises the thorny question of how we may calculate the *overall* intrinsic value of such a state. The answer depends on the comparative value of (i) pleasure/pain and (ii) interest-fittingness – an issue we take up in §3.

Interestingly, the intrinsic value of pleasure is itself, for Brentano, the sum of two distinct intrinsic goods. Recall that for Brentano, pleasure is a specific kind of conscious experience, one that employs a distinctive mode of presenting the intentional object (I have proposed in Chap. 7 the mode which presents-as-prima-

facie-good-here-and-now). According to Brentano, though, presentation as such is already intrinsically good! Brentano writes:

Presentations belong doubtless to what is valuable in and of itself, and indeed, I daresay that every presentation is valuable, taken in and of itself. (Brentano 1952: 188 [119])

What Brentano seems to have in mind here is that the very occurrence of a conscious state is something good in and of itself. The very existence of conscious activity adds value to the world.⁴ For it is always fitting to prefer consciousness over zombiehood:

... every presenting, considered in and of itself, is a good and recognizable as such, because an emotion with the character of correctness/fittingness can be directed at it. Everyone who had to choose between the state of unconsciousness and the having of any presentations whatsoever would, without question, welcome even the poorest [presentation]... (Brentano 1959: 144; see also 1952: 188-9 [119])

This means, in turn, that the intrinsic goodness of pleasure is the sum of the intrinsic goodness of (i) the presentation it is grounded in and (ii) the particular modification of the presenting it employs. We may put this by saying that the intrinsic goodness of a pleasure is the sum of the intrinsic goodness of the presentation and of its pleasantness.⁵ Accordingly, the intrinsic value of a *fitting* pleasure is the sum of *three* types of intrinsic goodness: (i) the very occurrence of the presentation as such, (ii) that presentation's being a pleasure, and (iii) that pleasure being fitting.

So far, we have encountered three kinds of intrinsic goodness: conscious activity, pleasure, and interest-fittingness. This list is in fact *almost* exhaustive. Brentano asserts only one other kind of intrinsic good, which he calls alternately knowledge (*Erkenntnis*), insight, or fitting/correct judgment. He writes:

Already Aristotle included knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) in the table of goods... And indeed, if anyone should pose the question why we like knowledge better than error, this would seem to us no less laughable than if we had asked why we would rather enjoy ourselves than suffer pain. (1952: 183 [116]; see also 1889: 22, 28 [22, 29])

Two points bear stressing here. First, Brentano’s claim of intrinsic value concerns *Erkenntnis* rather than *Wissen*, so something like knowledge-*of* rather than knowledge-*that*. What kind of restriction this really amounts to is not straightforward, given that for Brentano all belief is belief-in rather than belief-that (as we saw in Chap. 4). Secondly, what separates knowledge-of from mere belief-in is *fittingness*: any fitting belief-in qualifies as *Erkenntnis* for Brentano. Given that the mere occurrence of belief-in is *not* intrinsically valuable for Brentano, in claiming that knowledge is intrinsically valuable, all he is claiming is that the fittingness of beliefs (and disbeliefs!) is an intrinsic good.



In summary, for Brentano there are exactly four things of positive intrinsic value in our world: presentation, pleasantness, interest-fittingness, and judgment-fittingness.⁶ Observe that Brentano’s ‘table of goods’ reflects quite closely his fundamental classification of conscious states into presentation, judgment, and interest. Recall from Chap. 3 that while judgment and interest have a standard of fittingness that applies to them, presentations do not. And here we find ourselves with a table of goods three quarters of which consists in the fittingness of judgments, the fittingness of interest states, and the mere *occurrence* of presentations. The only extra element is the *occurrence* of pleasure, a particular type of interest state. This gives us a table where half the intrinsic goods are a matter of the occurrence of a conscious state and half a matter of the *fittingness* of a conscious state; and where half concern the realm of interest and half the other conscious realms (Table 9.1).

	<u>value in occurrence</u>	<u>value in fittingness</u>
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<u>Interest-related</u>	pleasure	interest-fittingness
<u>Interest-external</u>	presentations	belief-fittingness

Table 9.1. Brentano's Table of Goods

The result is quite a striking ethical theory, one where all value derives from four intrinsic goods, all of which are confined to our conscious life. It turns out, then, that Brentano's moral philosophy, *too*, is grounded in his philosophy of consciousness.

Indeed, if we keep in mind Brentano's reism, it would seem that his four intrinsic goods are just four special kinds of conscious subject. As we saw in Chap. 6, Brentano's world contains nothing but concrete particulars, though some which are quite unusual (namely, the accidents). Of this lot of concrete particulars, a proper subset are intrinsically valuable. The emerging view is this:

(INTRINSIC) Only four kinds of entity are intrinsically good: presenting-subjects, pleased-subjects, fittingly-interested-subjects, and fittingly-judging-subjects.

Note that presenting-subjects, pleased-subjects, fittingly-interested-subjects, and fittingly-judging-subjects are all accidents in Brentano's ontology. This creates a certain difficulty, since accidents depend for their existence on substances (in this case, persons like you and me, who are doing the presenting, experiencing the pleasure, and so on). There are two ways for Brentano to go here. He may embrace the surprising consequence that no substance is intrinsically valuable. (Substances could still be *instrumentally* good, insofar as their existence is a precondition for the existence of intrinsic goods.) Alternatively, he could claim that the substances on

which depend presenting-subjects, pleased-subjects, fittingly-interested-subjects, and fittingly-judging-subjects have intrinsic value as well. On this view, all things considered there are *five* kinds of intrinsically good thing: the four mentioned in INTRINSIC, plus the substances whereupon these depend. Which is the better way to go here? There is certainly a natural inclination to choose the second, valuing the persons themselves at least as much as their valuable accidents. The inclination is nicely captured by Kraus:

It is not for the sake of increasing goods and reducing evils, but rather for the sake of elevating as much as possible the incalculable intrinsic value of the relevant beings, that we seek to make the goods accessible to as many as possible... (Kraus 1937: 275, quoted in Janoušek and Rollinger forthcoming)

But Brentano may have been harder-nosed than his student here. I am not familiar with any *ethical* text in which Brentano addresses the issue, but in a 1915 dictation on space and impenetrability, of all topics, he says in passing the following:

... the actual thinking [or presenting] added as accident to some soul is incomparably more significant than the soul's substance itself. It is here [in the thinking] that we find the oppositions of knowledge and error, higher love and preference for the bad; so that Aristotle could say that a mind without actual thinking, lost in eternal sleep, would be devoid of all dignity (*Würde*). (Brentano 1976: 184 [155])

Here Brentano seems to dismiss substances as not themselves endowed with any value. It is not people who have moral weight, but conscious-people, joyful-people, fittingly-interested-people, and correctly-believing-people who do!

A final point: corresponding to Brentano's table of goods will be also a 'table of evils.' Interestingly, however, it would seem Brentano's table of evils would include only *three* items: unfitting belief, unfitting attitude, and pain (or rather unfitting-believers, unfitting-attitudinizers, and pained-persons). Presentation does not have an opposing kind of entity – the only thing we can oppose to the occurrence of a presentation is the nonoccurrence of one. If Brentano's ultimate value-bearers were states of affairs, then he could claim that the state of affairs of a presentation not occurring is something real, which therefore can bear value,

including negative value. But since Brentano's ultimate value-bearers are individuals, and he does not countenance nonexistent individuals in his ontology, there can be no fourth item in his table of evils corresponding to presenting-individuals in his table of goods. Thus Brentano's 'table of valuables' will include only seven things – four intrinsic goods and three intrinsic evils.

2.2. *Objections to Brentano's Table*

Objections to Brentano's table of goods divide into two groups: some might claim it is too short, proposing further intrinsic goods; some might claim it is too long, rejecting some of Brentano's alleged intrinsic goods. We can discuss neither in great detail here, but will consider briefly the sort of issues that arise in each case.

Brentano is actually quite tentative about the *exhaustiveness* of his table of goods, but is nonetheless inclined toward it. He writes:

1. Is a virtuous disposition preferable to its opposite? We actually love and admire people more on account of their character than because of isolated moral actions... Are dispositions also therefore valuable in themselves – or are they only due to the activities that result from them? 2. Are plants love-worthy in and of themselves, for their own sake, something to be taken as good in itself?... 3. Is each and every thing a good, quite aside from its unfailing instrumentality (*allfälligen Nützlichkeit*)?... One is inclined to answer: No! (Brentano 1952: 206 [130])

In this passage Brentano considers and tentatively rejects three potential new intrinsic goods.

In the first group are 'virtuous disposition.' Consider a person who does not just harbor a fitting desire right now, but has a stable disposition to harbor fitting rather than unfitting desires. Given that fitting desire is an intrinsic good, the disposition to have such desires is a *virtuous* disposition. Brentano question is whether (a) having such a virtuous disposition is good in and of itself, or (b) it is only the *manifestations* of this disposition which are intrinsically good, and the disposition as such is merely *instrumentally* good. At bottom, the question is

whether two worlds indistinguishable in terms of what actually occurs in them, but where in one Jimmy's fitting desires are grounded in a stable disposition while in the other Jimmy's fitting desires are something of a happy accident, are of equal or differing intrinsic values. If we think the one world is intrinsically better than the other, this must be due to the intrinsic value contributed by the disposition; if instead we think that they are of equal intrinsic value, then we do not assign the mere disposition any intrinsic value. Now, since Brentano's table of goods includes four occurrent intrinsic goods, the same kind of question will arise for four distinct types of virtuous disposition: the disposition to judge correctly, the disposition to emote or will fittingly, a joyful disposition, and the disposition to engage in much conscious activity. On all of these, Brentano is tempted by the view that mere dispositions are only *instrumentally* valuable – valuable insofar as their manifestations are intrinsically valuable. Thus a temperamentally considerate person is in no better than an inconsiderate person if it just so happens that the two have shown *actual* consideration with equal frequency. If character is destiny, it is only instrumentally so; the *destination* is occurrent conscious life full of intrinsic good.⁷

In addition, Brentano considers whether *life* might be an intrinsic good. This is what the question about plants seems to get at. Unlike animals, who often have a mental life, which Brentano has already accepted as intrinsically valuable, plants have only a nonmental life, hence a life deprived of what he has already accepted as intrinsically valuable. Yet there might be a strong intuition that a pro attitude would be fitting toward the living as such, quite independently of the potential pleasures and insights of the living. (Left-wing environmentalists and right-wing abortion opponents might agree on this point!) Again, Brentano is tempted by the notion that while the environment might be instrumentally valuable (to conscious beings), it is not intrinsically valuable. More specifically, life as such has no intrinsic value: a zombie world with rocks and flowers is no better than a zombie world with rocks only. At the same time, life must be granted enormous instrumental value in

Brentano's ethics, insofar as it appears to be a precondition for all conscious activity, hence for pleasure, fitting interest, and fitting judgments.

Finally, Brentano considers and tentatively rejects the notion that as such might be intrinsically valuable. Here too, it might seem that as a precondition of everything, including everything valuable, being as such must be in and of itself valuable. But ultimately Brentano is tempted by the opposite view: a zombie world with more stuff in it is no better than a zombie world with less.

Interestingly, since he is not entirely sure that existence, life, and virtuous disposition are merely instrumentally valuable, Brentano articulates also a fallback position: that these are *intrinsically* valuable, but their intrinsic value is greatly outweighed by the intrinsic value of the four official items on his list (1952: 209 [131]). This means that in situations where we have to choose between two intrinsic goods, these potential addenda to the table will typically be overlooked in favor of the four more established items on the table.

Moore (1903a §50, §55) held that among the intrinsic goods is *beauty*. To that extent, Moore would consider the existence of the right kind of flowers as intrinsically good, not in virtue of the flowers being alive though, but in virtue of being beautiful. Now, Brentano does not cite beauty as such in his list of intrinsic goods. Recall from Chap. 8, however, that Brentano analyzes beauty in terms of fitting delight, that is, a fitting mental state composed of first-order presentation (e.g., of flowers) and a second-order joy taken in that first-order presentation. By its very nature, then, fitting delight is quadruply intrinsically good in Brentano's ethics: (i) insofar as it involves a first-order presentation, (ii) insofar as it involves a second-order presentation of that presentation, (iii) insofar as the second-order presentation is pleasant, and (iv) insofar as that second-order pleasure – a state of interest – is fitting. Insofar as it provokes the instantiation of these four intrinsic goods, the beautiful flower is *instrumentally* good.⁸

Modern consequentialists sometimes focus on more global properties of a good life, such as well-being or welfare (see Sen 1979). The idea is that while

pleasure contributes to a person's well-being, so may friendship, satisfaction, meaning, and the like more complex elements. According to welfare consequentialists, it is this more complex phenomenon of welfare that is intrinsically good, and anything which enhances welfare is instrumentally good.⁹ Evidently Brentano did not include anything like welfare or well-being in his table of goods. One suspects his motivation for this omission is the conviction that well-being is simply the resultant of his four acknowledged goods, not a distinct fifth good. On this view, a person's well-being is but a function of an active conscious life with pleasure and fitting emotions and beliefs aplenty. In particular, the various other ingredients of a good life that welfarists tend to cite have such intrinsic value as they do in virtue of involving as constituents (some of) Brentano's four intrinsic goods. For instance, friendship might constitutively involve fitting care for one's friends, pleasure in their company, and so on; if the intrinsic value of friendship is *exhausted* by the sum of such intrinsic values already taken into account in Brentano's table of goods, then friendship as such does not inject into the world any proprietary intrinsic value.

It is an open question, of course, whether everything that appears intrinsically good in our world can be seen as just a mixture of Brentano's four fundamental intrinsic goods. The question is obviously too vast to settle here, but I trust that the above discussion clarifies the structure and burden of the kind of pluralist consequentialism defended by Brentano. Evidently, Brentano's bet is on a positive answer, but we have seen he is open in principle to certain supplementations of his *Gütertafel*.



A completely different challenge Brentano faces is to ensure that none of the four goods in his table is *de trop*. While it is relatively uncontroversial that pleasure as such is in and of itself good, this is less obvious for conscious activity, knowledge, and fitting emotion.

There is no question, of course, that conscious activity is a good. A zombie world is quite plausibly devoid of all meaning and value (Siewert 2013). If so, you cannot have any value in the absence of conscious activity. However, this guarantees at most that conscious activity is an *instrumental* good, on a par with life and existence. After all, for Brentano a lifeless world is devoid of all meaning and value too, as is an empty world. But life and existence derive their value only from the fact that they are preconditions for what is intrinsically valuable. So theirs is a derivative, not intrinsic, value. By the same token, one might suggest that conscious activity is valuable only insofar as it is a precondition for pleasure, say, or knowledge; it is derivatively rather than intrinsically valuable.

As noted, Brentano's main argument for the *intrinsic* goodness of consciousness is simply that anyone in her right mind would prefer consciousness over zombiehood, and it would be very fitting for her to do so (Brentano 1959: 144). But while we can readily agree that it is fitting to have a pro attitude toward an *important* or *interesting* thought, is it so obviously fitting to have a pro attitude toward a *trivial* thought, say a fleeting image of gravel? Imagine two possible worlds that differ only in this detail, that in one of them Jimmy fell asleep at ten o'clock sharp and in the other he fell asleep fifty milliseconds later and had a fleeting image of gravel during that interval. It is hard to tell whether (a) the two worlds are equally fitting to desire or (b) there is an ever so minuscule extra desirability associated with the second world. Likewise, imagine two worlds in which Jimmy suffers from an obsessive-compulsive disorder, which induces him to repeatedly think of octopi (he finds neither special interest nor special displeasure in these repeated thoughts, let us stipulate); it is not obvious that a world in which Jimmy has one more random octopus thought is more fittingly desirable.¹⁰ Now, the very fact that it is *difficult* to tell which is the right position to take on such questions suggests the following conditional: if it turns out that conscious activity *as such* does have intrinsic value, then it may be very limited – greatly outweighed by the other items on the table of goods. (Recall Brentano's fallback position on the value of existence, life, and the virtues.)

The notion that fitting belief, knowledge, or insight is intrinsically good is also contestable. There is no question that the *experience* of insight or understanding, for instance, involves a distinctive highly positive affect that makes it fitting to want. Moreover, the relevant affect is *sui generis*, in the sense that it is irreproducible by the summation of any number of other kinds of positive affect. No amount of orgasm and cheesecake can replicate quite the same *kind* of good feeling we experience when we suddenly understand something or have a deep insight ('when the scales fall from our eyes'). But this in itself motivates only a much more limited notion: that in assigning intrinsic value to pleasure, we must keep in mind that not only 'bodily' pleasure is at stake – there are certain irreducibly 'spiritual' pleasures that must be recognized as well, including the pleasures of understanding and insight. This was famously Mill's (1863: 11-12) great contribution to the consequentialist tradition. Presumably, however, Brentano has something stronger in mind. In adding to his table of goods knowledge or insight *on top* of pleasure, he seems to suggest that the pleasurable aspect of insight does not exhaust insight's intrinsic value. There is an additional measure of intrinsic value contained in the fact that insight offers a kind of epistemic penetration of reality: the clear and distinct presenting to the mind of how things really are is intrinsically good, quite apart from any pleasure it might involve.¹¹

Interestingly, Brentano does not offer much by way of *argument* for the intrinsic value of knowledge or insight. I have already quoted his main support for the claim: 'if anyone should pose the question why we like knowledge better than error, this would seem to us no less laughable than if we had asked why we would rather enjoy ourselves than' (1952: 183 [116]). For any given belief of yours, your preference for that belief being true over its being false is, *other things being equal*, self-imposing in the sense explained in Chap. 8. (The qualification 'other things being equal' is required to rule out cases where one prefers one's belief to be false because of the pain its truth would occasion – as when one suspects one has been betrayed by a friend. Such preference has to do only with the instrumental value of the belief's truth.)

Brentano's basic thought here might be framed in terms of Nozick's (1974: 42-5) 'experience machine.' Consider the following variant: imagine you are offered to be hooked into a science-fiction machine that (i) predicts your entire future life and (ii) directly stimulates your brain just so as to reproduce the experiences you would have had, but adding a few more positive experiences and dropping a few negative ones. (It might, for instance, take one instance in which your favorite team loses a game and induce in you the illusory experience of your team winning that game.) Most of us seem to prefer living our 'real' life over entering the experience machine – and intuitively, we seem to be rational in so preferring. Likewise, we find it perfectly rational for Neo to choose the red pill over the blue pill in the Matrix film, even though taking the red pill promises to proffer many more units of displeasure. This is essentially the intuition Brentano taps into in holding that awareness of how things really are is intrinsically valuable independently of such pleasure as may be thereby procured.

The intuition is of course very robust.¹² One might nonetheless respond that the untutored intuition of people who have not sufficiently reflected on the question of what is intrinsically valuable should not count for all that much (Feldman 2011). This kind of response is enhanced when combined with a debunking explanation of where the intuition comes from. Here is one potential explanation. When we contemplate *someone else* who thinks her team won a game that in fact it has lost, we feel a measure of derision (however mild) toward her – she is a fool, after all. But now, when we contemplate the experience-machine scenario, we imagine it 'from the outside,' from the third-person perspective. For we do not just imagine experiencing certain things, but in addition imagine that these things are not really happening – something we can only do 'from outside' the machine. As a result, we effectively adopt the same viewpoint we take on others being in that scenario, and consequently experience something of the same derision – but this time toward our own imagined self.

From Brentano's Aristotelian viewpoint, this kind of debunking explanation should not be available to a real philosopher. A philosopher who loves wisdom not

for its own sake, but because of some positive titillation she expects it to occasion, is a bad instance of a philosopher. A real philosopher does not seek wisdom in order that she might use it to obtain something else. No activity requires further justification that can be shown to enhance wisdom. For it is through the individual conduct of contemplative lives that the universe progresses toward its fundamental *telos* of reaching self-understanding. All the good feelings in the history of the universe are just so many agreeable occurrences by the roadside of this advance toward the universe's self-understanding. This is why Aristotle took the contemplative life to be the best kind of life.

I am not sure how moved we should be by this line of thought, but am quite sure it animated Brentano's own conduct of his life and undergirds his commitment to knowledge or understanding (as opposed to the pleasures attendant thereupon) as an intrinsic good. This is not the place to settle the issue of whether knowledge (or correct belief, or insight) really is intrinsically valuable. What matters for our purposes is that Brentano evidently takes it to be so, on the grounds that anyone who made a self-imposing decision on whether to enter the experience machine would decide not to.



Brentano's other highest intrinsic good is fitting pro or con attitude. Here a serious problem arises rather immediately: the citing of fitting attitude can help guide us in our moral action only if we are told *which attitudes are fitting*. Qua first-order normative ethicist, Brentano should let us know which attitudes are fitting, or else we have no idea how to pursue the good. So what attitudes *are* fitting?

The natural answer is of course: those pro attitudes are fitting which are directed at what is truly good (and those con attitudes are fitting which are directed at what is truly bad). But what *is* truly good (bad)? Brentano's answer is encapsulated in his table of goods, one of which is precisely fitting attitude. This seems to send us on an explanatory circle. But perhaps the point of the inclusion of fitting attitude is to point at a *recursive specification* of a much longer *full* table of

content (Hurka 2000: 25). This includes: (i) pleasure, (ii) consciousness, (iii) knowledge, (iv) a pro attitude toward pleasure, (v) a pro attitude toward consciousness, (vi) a pro attitude toward knowledge, (vii) a pro attitude toward a pro attitude toward pleasure, ... and so on. Thus, not only pleasure is good, but also the desiring of pleasure and the desiring of desiring of pleasure; not only knowledge is good, but also the approving of knowledge and the approving of approving of knowledge; and so on and so forth. On the present suggestion, this is all there is to the inclusion of fitting attitudes in the table of goods.

It might be objected that if that is all there is to the inclusion of fitting attitudes, then fitting attitudes will not make any distinctive contribution to actual evaluation of competing states of affairs. But this is not true. Thus, we must do justice to the fact that pleasure intentionally brought about is intrinsically better than pleasure accidentally taking place. The inclusion of fitting attitudes is a way of doing justice to that fact: a pleasure intentionally brought about involves not just two intrinsically good things (the conscious state and its pleasantness), but *three* – the fitting intention to bring the pleasure about makes the difference.

A better objection, however, is that the recursive approach to the intrinsic value of fitting attitudes does not return the *right* evaluations in certain cases. Consider again the aforementioned intuition that the sad-Hitler world is better than the happy-Hitler world. The citing of fitting attitude seemed to us to vindicate the intuition: although the world where the final thirty seconds of Hitler's life are spent in shame and self-hatred contains less pleasure than the world where they are spent in pride and elation, the latter world contains more fitting emotions than the former. If it turns out, however, that fitting emotions are just positive emotions toward pleasure, knowledge, or conscious activity, or negative emotions toward displeasure or ignorance, then we can envisage scenarios in which sad-Hitler undergoes an episode of shame which (i) is intuitively fitting but (ii) unfitting by the theory's lights. Suppose sad-Hitler feels momentary shame about ordering the execution of a thirteen-year-old girl. All her family and acquaintances had already been murdered, and her execution was swift, let us stipulate, so her execution occasioned no

additional pain, but much glee on the part of the executioners. Had the girl survived the holocaust, let us further stipulate, the great majority of her beliefs would be false. By the lights of Brentano's theory, sad-Hitler's shame in ordering the execution is unfitting, so the happy-Hitler world is better than the sad-Hitler one. Wrong result.

The other option for Brentano is to identify some monadic characteristic of any pro (or con) attitude, unrelated to *what* it is about, that makes it fitting. If such a characteristic could be found, then the appeal to other items on Brentano's table of goods is not necessary to know which attitudes are fitting. This strategy recommends itself to Brentano, since as we saw in the previous chapter, he understands an attitude's fittingness in terms of the monadic characteristic I called self-imposition – the practical analogue of self-evidence. More specifically, according to Brentano a pro attitude toward *x* is fitting just if anyone who took a self-imposing attitude toward *x* would take a pro (rather than con) attitude toward it, where self-imposition is an intrinsic feature of self-imposing attitudes. In recommending that we attempt to maximize fitting attitudes in the world, Brentano's ethics can be interpreted as recommending that we attempt to maximize the occurrence of pro and con attitudes which either (a) are self-imposing or (b) would be the attitudes adopted by someone whose attitudes were self-imposing.

However, this strategy brings up again worries about whether Brentano's ethics can informatively guide us in our moral conduct. If one of our own attitudes is self-imposing, then we can know, according to Brentano, that its occurrence would be self-imposing in anyone who experienced it; so we would be well justified to try to maximize the occurrence of this attitude in the world. It is less clear, however, how we can know, of any non-self-imposing attitude we experience, whether it would be the attitude adopted by someone who enjoyed a self-imposing stance on the matter at hand. Suppose *x* merits a pro attitude, but you have no attitude toward *x*. Obviously, you cannot detect self-imposition in an attitude you do not even have (compare Ehrenfels 1988: 216). You must instead speculate about the attitude taken by someone who did have a self-imposing attitude, pro or con, toward *x*. Consider

again Sartre's student. He evidently does not inner-perceive self-imposition either with respect to the option of joining the war effort or with respect to the option of tending to his mother. What is he to do? Replying 'Pick the option that someone with a self-imposing attitude would pick' would be just cruel.¹³

Might there be some other monadic characterization of pro and con attitudes, not in terms of what they are about, that can 'tag' them as fitting? A Kantian might propose that a fitting attitude is one that treats a person as an end and not merely as a means. On this suggestion, among the intrinsically good things are *respectful* attitudes, where 'respectful' is meant in the sense of Kantian respect for persons, that is, in the sense of treating as an end. The suggestion is on its face rather plausible. On the one hand, having a respectful attitude toward a person – treating her as an end in herself – is clearly a good thing. On the other hand, such goodness as the attitude has does not seem to derive (only) from its consequences; it has to do (partially at least) with the internal character of respectful attitude as such. Furthermore, we may construe the relevant internal character in terms of attitude rather than content. The idea would be that Kantian respect is the kind of mental state which essentially presents-as-end-rather-than-mere-means its object. The occurrence of every such attitude toward a person, it might be suggested, is good in and of itself. Thus one option for a Brentanian is to take a leaf from Kant and identify respectful attitude toward persons as the fourth intrinsic good, complementing pleasure, knowledge, and consciousness.

Needless to say, there is no trace of anything like this in Brentano himself (and given Brentano's general attitude toward Kant, there is not much risk that a manuscript might resurface that developed Brentano's ethics in that direction). More deeply, there is a tension between the fact that Kantian respect is supposed to be directed at persons, on the one hand, and the Brentanian thought, on the other hand, that what is intrinsically valuable is not *persons*, but pleased-persons, knowing-persons, and so on.¹⁴ On the resulting view, persons as such are not intrinsically valuable, but treating them as ends is. One is entitled to wonder: Why should I treat as an end something devoid of intrinsic value? Citing the fact that that

thing has immense instrumental value will not do, since valuing something for its instrumental value is precisely valuing it as a means. Thus this Kanto-Brentanian combination seems, at least initially, unstable.¹⁵ Nonetheless, it has the virtue of *illustrating* the kind of move the Brentanian should make to address the problem of guidance: offering a substantive characterization of those attitudes which are fitting so that we know what to do when told that one of the things we need to maximize in the world is fitting attitudes.

I conclude that the inclusion of fitting attitudes in the table of goods is highly problematic, as long as no account is provided of which attitudes, or kinds of attitude, are fitting. More generally, while the injunctions to maximize pleasure, conscious activity, and fitting beliefs are fairly straightforwardly followable, the injunction to maximize fitting attitudes is not (except perhaps insofar as it involves taken pro attitudes toward pleasure, conscious activity, and fitting belief). At the same time, we cannot simply strike fitting attitudes off our table – we need them in order to get the right result in the happy-Hitler/sad-Hitler case. So Brentano's normative ethics clearly needs supplementation here.

This strikes me as the most significant challenge facing Brentano's ethical theory. It is not unrelated, of course, to what is probably the weakest part of his metaethics – the question of how inner perception could pick up not just on an attitude's *feeling* self-imposing (a completely psychological property), but its actually *being* self-imposing (a partly normative property). His entire moral philosophy is thus threatened by a certain elusiveness attending its *Punctum Archimedes* – self-imposition.

3. What to do

Even if Brentano's table of goods were accepted *as is*, it would not yet deliver an answer to the question 'What to do?' For that, we would need an account of the relative weight or significance of different intrinsic goods. We have seen that what

we should do, at any one time, is take whatever available course of action will likely lead to the *intrinsically best* state of affairs. And we have seen what makes a state of affairs intrinsically good to begin with. But to know which state of affairs is intrinsically *best*, we also need an account of what is intrinsically *better* than what. Without that, we *still* receive no guidance from the One True Table of Goods.

In many cases, intrinsic betterness is a matter of *quantitative* superiority: more pleasure is intrinsically better than less, more intense pleasure is intrinsically better than milder pleasure, and so on. Likewise, situations involving several intrinsic goods are better than situations involving a proper subset of those goods: pleasure is better than mere presentation, for instance, given that pleasure involves presentation as a component, so already includes the value of the presentation in it. In those cases, claims of intrinsic betterness seem unproblematic.

The trickier cases are those where quantitative comparison is unavailable. More pleasure is better than less, but is more pleasure better than more *knowledge*? Or is knowledge on the contrary more intrinsically valuable than pleasure? And what methodology are we to use in answering such questions? The difficulties surrounding non-quantitative comparison may inspire an incommensurability approach, whereby there is no way to weigh different intrinsic goods against each other.¹⁶ But incommensurability is not compulsory here. A different approach is to claim that in addition to quantitative superiority, there are facts of the matter regarding *qualitative superiority*, and it is those facts that decide whether pleasure is more intrinsically valuable than knowledge or the other way round. For example, Brentano follows Mill in holding that *mental* pleasure (*geistigen Freude*) is *mutatis mutandis* more valuable than *bodily* or *sensory* pleasure (*Sinneslust*): pleasure derived from a good poem is (other things being equal) more intrinsically valuable than pleasure derived from a good ice cream (Brentano 1952: 186 [117]). And he makes similar claims for the domains of judgment and interest writ large. Thus, he maintains that *positive* knowledge is *mutatis mutandis* intrinsically better than *negative* (1952: 184, 213 [116, 134]). In telling us how the world *is*, rather than how it is *not*, a fitting belief is of greater intrinsic value than a fitting disbelief. Likewise,

not all fitting interest states are equally intrinsically good: fitting love of x is intrinsically more valuable than fitting hatred of y (1952: 213 [134]).¹⁷

These are cases of qualitative superiority *within* individual types of intrinsic goods. For Mill, there can be no other kind of qualitative superiority, since ultimately there is only one kind of intrinsic good, pleasure. But Brentano is a pluralist here, so he recognizes cases of intrinsic betterness *across* goods. For example, other things being equal, interest-fittingness is more intrinsically valuable than pleasure: it is intrinsically better to experience fitting sorrow about extrajudicial killings of African-Americans than to take unfitting pleasure in it (Brentano 1889: 85 [91]; 1952: 213 [134]).

How might we *justify* such claims of qualitative intrinsic superiority? Mill's (1863: 12-3) argument was that people who know both kinds of pleasure prefer mental over physical pleasures; people who prefer physical pleasure have no real acquaintance with mental pleasure. Setting aside the veracity of this empirical claim, it seems to leave completely untouched the question of whether people who know both types of pleasure *ought* to prefer the mental variety. Some people prefer murder to ice cream. If they succeed in murdering everybody else, they would manage to make it a universal truth that all people prefer murder to ice cream. Yet the claim that murder is better than ice cream would not thereby become true.

Brentano's approach relies not on the preferences certain subjects actually have, but on the preferences they *ought* to have – the preferences it would be *fitting* for them to have. Recall from Chap. 8 that in addition to love and hate, which essentially present-as-good and present-as-bad, Brentano posits a third fundamental interest state, *preference*, whose essence is to present-as-better. Preference in this account is irreducible to love and hate: preferring x over y is *not* a matter of loving x more than one loves y . (We have seen the reasons for this in the previous chapter.) Accordingly, for Brentano ' x is intrinsically better than y ' does *not* mean 'It is fitting to love x more than y '; rather, it means 'It is fitting to prefer x over y .' That, in turn, means something like 'Anyone who adopted a self-imposing

comparative attitude toward x and y would prefer x over y .' The advantage of preference here, as opposed to greater love, is that while fitting greater love would at best be able to capture *quantitative* betterness, fitting preference has at least the chance of capturing also *qualitative* betterness.

Consider the case of mental versus bodily pleasure. In claiming that the former is more intrinsically valuable than the latter, what Brentano is saying is that, other things being equal, it is fitting to prefer mental pleasure over bodily pleasure. That is, anyone who adopted a self-imposing preference with respect to mental and bodily pleasure would adopt a preference for the former over the latter. Brentano *could* be wrong in claiming that such a person would in fact adopt the preference Brentano says she would. But we can at least see what grounds Brentano can cite in favor of his claim that mental pleasure is, as such, intrinsically better than bodily pleasure. And these grounds speak to what *ought* to be preferred, not only to what *is* preferred.

This approach to qualitative superiority will involve in some cases a kind of second-order fittingness. For to say that positive knowledge is, in itself, qualitatively better than negative knowledge is to say the following: it is fitting to prefer fitting belief over fitting disbelief. Likewise:

Pleasure in the bad is qua pleasure a good, and yet qua incorrect/unfitting emotion something bad... Therefore, in being disgusted with it as something bad [overall], we are actually performing an act of preference whereby the absence of something bad is given preference over something else which is good. And if that disgust is therewith recognized as correct/fitting, it must be because this preference has the character of correctness/fittingness. (Brentano 1889: 85 [90-1]; see also 1952: 213 [134])

That is, to say that fitting pain is intrinsically better than unfitting pleasure – read: that interest-fittingness is more intrinsically valuable than pleasantness – is to say this: it is fitting to prefer fitting pain over unfitting pleasure. Observe that it is this fact that explains why the sad-Hitler world is intrinsically better than the happy-Hitler world: although the latter involves pleasure whereas the former involves

pain, the former involves interest-fittingness while the latter involves interest-unfittingness – and it is fitting to prefer interest-fittingness over pleasure.



A further advantage of the fitting-preference approach is that it can be extended to the comparison of *combinations* of intrinsic values. For example, although positive knowledge is more intrinsically valuable than negative, it may well be that the combination of negative knowledge *and pleasure* is more intrinsically valuable than just positive knowledge. For Brentano, this would be the case if it is fitting to prefer that combination over positive knowledge, that is, if anyone who faced the relevant choice and had a self-imposing preference regarding it preferred negative knowledge plus pleasure. Of course, it may also turn out that positive knowledge is in fact fittingly preferable to the combination of negative knowledge and pleasure. The point is that such questions become meaningful within Brentano's framework.

Given that Brentano recognizes four types of intrinsic good, his *complete* ethical theory must take a stand on the qualitative superiority relations between every pair of possible combinations of these. Since there are fifteen such combinations, his complete theory must include thirty claims of the form 'With respect to combinations C_1 and C_2 of intrinsic values, C_1 is intrinsically better than/worse than/equal to C_2 .' It will, however, include considerably *more* than those thirty claims, since it will also have to address qualitative superiority relations *within* individual types of intrinsic goods, as well as quantitative superiority relations.

In fact, the complete theory would also have to address value comparisons *between* qualitative and quantitative superiority. Consider the claim that mental pleasure is *mutatis mutandis* more intrinsically valuable than bodily pleasure. In itself, this claim is totally consistent with the epistemic possibility that, as a matter of contingent fact, human beings' average bodily pleasures are in fact more intrinsically valuable than average mental pleasures. For it may turn out that we tend to experience sufficiently *greater* bodily than mental pleasure, so that the

quantitative superiority of the bodily pleasure compensates and indeed overrides the *qualitative* superiority of the mental pleasure. Perhaps it is fitting to prefer a hundred perfect cheesecakes to an adequate Emily Dickinson poem, say because the former afford so much bodily pleasure as to overwhelm the moderate mental pleasure afforded by the latter. This kind of claim may seem initially hard to assess, but within Brentano's framework all it would mean is that someone who had a self-imposing preference here would prefer the cheesecakes.

In this way, Brentano's notion of fitting preference allows him to avoid the incommensurability of distinct intrinsic goods, indeed provides him with considerable flexibility in terms of evaluative comparison. At the same time, in some cases incommensurability may be the right way to go, namely, where no fitting preference is achievable. Interestingly, when we have to choose between a fitting pro attitude and a fitting belief, Brentano finds that we are unable to experience *any* self-imposing preference (1952: 214-5 [135]).¹⁸ This is so *not* in the sense that we experience a self-imposing neutrality; that would only suggest that fitting attitude and fitting judgment are *equally good*. The idea, rather, is that there is simply no fitting preference to be had (including 'null preference'). This suggests not that fitting attitude and fitting belief are equally valuable, but that their values are incommensurable.

What are the implications of such cases for action? What guidance are we to take from Brentano's theory in cases of incommensurability? Brentano's answer is:

... where it is impossible to establish intrinsic preferability, the latter must be taken out of consideration; it is as good as absent. (1952: 215 [135]; see also 1889: 28 [29])

This seems to suggest that cases of incommensurability will simply not affect the question of which among all attainable states of affairs is intrinsically best. Where two states of affairs differ in value in this way, that difference in value need not figure in our deliberation on which we ought to pursue. And if the two states of affairs differ *only* in this way, and are otherwise equally valuable, pursuing either is *permissible*, indeed right.

What, then, is the intrinsically *best* attainable state of affairs? That which, among all states of affairs one can bring about, it is fitting to prefer over all others. Sometimes two states of affairs may be equally good, or be incommensurable, but better than all others. In such cases, both are best. So, Brentano's account of *an* intrinsically best attainable state of affairs is this:

(BEST) For any agent A, time *t*, and state of affairs S, S is an intrinsically best state of affairs attainable by A at *t* iff (i) there is a course of action C, such that C is available to A at *t* and C would bring about S, and (ii) for any state of affairs S*, if there is a course of action C* available to A at *t* that would bring about S*, then S* is not fittingly preferable over S.¹⁹

The fact that S* is not fittingly preferable over S leaves open three possibilities: that S is fittingly preferable over S* (hence S is better), that the null preference is fitting (hence S and S* are equally good), or that no fitting preference state is available (incommensurability). In all three cases, pursuing S is permissible.

Note well: since what BEST addresses is *intrinsic* betterness, the kind of fitting preference at issue is of a special kind: it is fitting preference-for-own-sake. To prefer *x* over *y* for their own sake is to prefer *x* as such over *y* as such. This is different from the kind of *instrumental* preference involved in, say, preferring fork and knife over chopsticks. It is also different from preference simpliciter, which combines both intrinsic and instrumental evaluation. For example, it might be fitting to prefer-for-own-sake *x* over *y*, but there is a *z* such that *y* is instrumental in bringing about *z* and it is fitting to prefer-for-own-sake *z* over *x*. In that case, it may be fitting to prefer simpliciter *y* over *x*. But this would not mean that *y* is intrinsically better than *x*.

Brentano's complete answer to the question 'What to do?' consists of the combination of RIGHT and BEST, with INTRINSIC providing specific content for concrete choices. For my part, I find myself in intuitive agreement with Brentano's various claims about relative intrinsic value ('intrinsic superiority'). Nonetheless, at the risk of repeating myself, let me state that as long as BEST is framed in terms of fitting

preference, and fitting preference is unpacked in terms of the preferences of someone whose preferences are self-imposing, I find the resulting bit of moral guidance very unsatisfactory. It is simply hard to know how to follow an advice of the form 'Do what someone with an infallible moral compass would do!'

Conclusion

In summary, Brentano's ethical theory provides an answer to both central questions of normative ethics. To the question 'Which things are good?', the conjunction of GOOD and INTRINSIC provides the answer: anything is good which is instrumental in bringing about, or else *is*, a pleased-subject, consciously-active-subject, fittingly-judging-subject, and/or fittingly-interested-subject. To the question 'What to do?', the conjunction of RIGHT, BEST, and INTRINSIC provides a compact answer, but one which holds the key for guiding us through life both locally and globally: locally, in the sense that it hopes to provide in principle a verdict on every possible moral decision; globally, in the sense that it plants clearly before the mind what it is that is intrinsically valuable in life, and to that extent what our moral life is *all about*. I have just voiced my skepticism about the local guidance offered by Brentano's ethics. But the global kind of guidance, which just tells us, and reminds us, what is really good in and of itself, is still of first importance. Arguably, this capacity to keep clear before the mind the difference between our ultimate ends, on the one hand, and the various more instrumental goods we spend our lives chasing, on the other, is the hallmark of *practical wisdom*. It marks the difference between those who rove through life more or less blindly, stumbling from task to task, and those who *lead* their life in an aware way.²⁰

¹ I am unfamiliar with a serious discussion of this issue in the Brentano corpus. For a recent serious discussion, and a proposal for an analysis of the relevant notions, see Dorsey 2013.

² It should be noted that although Brentano's consequentialism is both pluralistic and analytic, its pluralism is essential to it whereas the analyticity could in principle be given up. (Moore's consequentialism is a precedent, having started out analytic but later acquired a substantive status.)

³ Brentano writes: 'Pleasure in the bad is, as pleasure, a good, and only insofar as it is an unfitting/incorrect emotion something bad.' Even pleasure in, say, a cruel act is, qua pleasure, a good – though qua directed at a cruel act it is also bad. (As we will see later on, unfitting emotion is an intrinsic bad in Brentano's ethics.) This raises the question of how we are to calculate the event's overall value, something we will have occasion to discuss in due course.

⁴ Since every conscious state is 'grounded in' a presentation – it either simply presents something, or presents-as-F (that is, present in a specific manner) something – we can say that the very occurrence of presentation is intrinsically good.

⁵ Here I use 'pleasantness' not to denote a potential pleasure taken *in* the presentation, but the modification of the presentation itself that renders it a pleasure-presentation.

⁶ Recall from Chap. 8 that interest-fittingness and judgment-fittingness are two different things for Brentano (Brentano 1907a: 148-9 [144]). Otherwise we could reduce the table to three items: presentation, pleasure, and fittingness.

⁷ To that extent, Brentano would not take the *virtues* (such as generosity, consideration, courage, and so on) to be intrinsic goods. At the same time, he qualifies as a virtue consequentialist in the sense of Driver (2001) and Bradley (2005); namely, the sense that a character trait qualifies as a virtue iff *its exercise* increases the amount of (intrinsic) good in the world (see Bradley 2005: 295 for a more precise formulation).

⁸ In saying this I am opposing Chisholm, who lists beauty among Brentano's intrinsically good things (Chisholm 1986: 60). This is surely a mistake, as is made clear by the way Brentano insists that there is probably no intrinsic good outside the realm of conscious life (Brentano 1952: 206-7 [130]).

⁹ Note that to represent a genuine alternative to Brentano's consequentialism, it must be friendship or meaning itself, and not the pleasures of friendship or meaning, that are taken to be intrinsically valuable.

¹⁰ Brentano has another argument for the intrinsic goodness of consciousness: that when we construct in our mind the idea of a perfect being, we do not attribute to it every belief and every desire, since it will not have false beliefs and unfitting desires, but we do attribute to it every possible idea – as someone who entertains, or apprehends, or is aware of every notion or possibility (Brentano 1952: 189 [119]). Here too, however, it is hard to tell whether the being's perfection requires, or on the contrary is compromised, by the fact that it had not a million but a million and one images of gravel 'floating' in its mind.

¹¹ That this is what Brentano has in mind is further suggested by the fact that Brentano recognizes the intrinsic goodness of 'higher pleasures' of Mill's variety in his discussion of the value of pleasure: pleasure derived from a good poem is more intrinsically valuable than (an equal amount of) pleasure derived from a good ice cream (1952: 186 [117]). So he certainly has something more in mind when claiming that knowledge or fitting belief or insight is a further kind of intrinsic good.

¹² This can be seen by the extraordinary number of philosophers who take it to be a knock-down refutation of hedonism about well-being, that is, the thesis that what makes a life good is just the pleasure it involves. For a staggering list, see Weijers 2013 fn4.

¹³ For the background on Sartre's student, see Chap. 7.

¹⁴ Thanks to Kavin Mulligan for pointing this tension out to me.

¹⁵ One option is to distinguish two notion of intrinsic value: intrinsic goodness and intrinsic worth. We can then claim that persons as such, although not intrinsic goods, have intrinsic worth, and that in virtue of their intrinsic worth they merit respectful attitudes (that is, attitudes modulated by the awareness of them as ends and not mere means). In this picture, respectful attitudes toward persons are intrinsically good *even though* the things they are attitudes toward – i.e., persons – are not. Note that this involves positing not just a plurality of items with intrinsic value *in the same sense of 'intrinsic value,'* but also positing different senses in which something has intrinsic value.

¹⁶ Indeed, this could be integrated into a fitting-attitude account of intrinsic value, so that comparison of fittingness between certain distinct attitudes is claimed to be impossible (Anderson 1993).

¹⁷ One *can* hold that fitting love is better than fitting hate because although both are fitting, love also tends to involve positive affect, whereas hate tends to involve negative affect. If this is why fitting love to be better than fitting hatred, then this would be an instance of quantitative betterness. But there is a clear intuition that even in case a fitting hatred is followed by a certain (fitting) glee, equal to the glee accompanying a fitting love, the latter is still intrinsically better. In that case, we would have to say that this is an instance of qualitative betterness.

¹⁸ Likewise, in some cases the amount of pleasure and the significance of knowledge might be such that it becomes impossible to tell which it would be fitting to prefer (Brentano 1952: 215 [135]). A fitting belief about the local tailor's phone number has a certain amount of intrinsic value in virtue of being fitting (independently of its instrumental value, which it has in virtue of the pleasure it may afford when tailoring is needed), and it may be impossible to tell how this amount compares to the pleasure taken in a cheesecake ice cream.

¹⁹ This formulation, again, adverts to states of affairs for convenience. In truth we should think of S and S* as ranging over those special Brentanian individuals. A best course of action is the one that brings into existence that among those individuals which bears no less intrinsic than any other that can be brought into existence on the occasion.

²⁰ For comments on a previous draft of this chapter, I am grateful to Kevin Mulligan, Mark Timmons, and Benjamin Wald.