

ROBERT HARTMAN AND BRAND BLANSHARD ON REASON, MORAL RELATIVISM, AND INTRINSIC GOODNESS

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Abstract

This article explains that and how Robert S. Hartman and Brand Blanshard, two of the most insightful philosophers of the 20th Century, were complete rationalists in their approach to philosophical problems, especially those in value theory. They both rejected emotive, subjectivist, and relativistic approaches to ethical values. Both were convinced that “intrinsic goodness” is the most important, meaningful, and basic of all ethical or moral concepts. Just how they understood reasonableness and the task of philosophers is explored. Significant differences between the two on the meaning of “good” are examined. Blanshard’s equating of “intrinsically good” with “fulfillment and pleasure” is critiqued, and Hartman’s alternative to this is presented and defended.

Introduction

Brand Blanshard was one of the most brilliant, creative, and insightful philosophers of the 20th Century. Like Robert Hartman, he also was and is one of the most neglected philosophers of that century. Though they differed in many ways, in addition to being ignored by most other professional philosophers, the two of them were very similar and on the right track on many important issues. Most importantly, both were philosophical rationalists, both rejected philosophical relativism in ethics, and both were convinced that “intrinsic goodness” is the most important, meaningful, and basic of all ethical or moral concepts. Just what all of this means will become clearer as we move along.

The three philosophers who had the most influence on my own philosophical thinking, convictions, and personal development were Charles Hartshorne in Process Philosophy, Robert S. Hartman in Axiology, the general theory of value, and Brand Blanshard in traditional Ethical

History and Theory. I have written and published much already about the first two. This discussion will be my first published paper on Brand Blanshard. Before getting deeply into the value theories of Hartman and Blanshard, please allow me to say a few words about my own personal relations with Blanshard.

After graduating from Emory University with a major in philosophy in 1956, I attended Yale Divinity School for three years—1956-1959. After that, I returned to Emory for a PhD in philosophy, which I received in 1962. Charles Hartshorne, who came to Emory when I was a college senior, was still teaching at Emory when I returned to Emory from Yale. I will say no more about him in this article, for it does not deal with process issues. At Yale I struggled for three years trying to decide whether to get a PhD in, and then teach, religion or philosophy. I took as many courses in the Graduate School of Philosophy at Yale as the Divinity School catalog would allow—almost a full year of philosophy courses. My two best teachers at Yale were Robert L. Calhoun, Systematic Theology, in the Divinity School and Brand Blanshard in the Philosophy Department. I took a one semester course in Problems of Metaphysics in the spring of 1957 and a year-long series of courses in Types of Ethical Theory from Blanshard in 1957-58. Including what was then current, he explained and critically examined almost everyone and everything in the history and philosophy of ethics—except Robert Hartman, who was little known at the time.

I wrote a number of papers for Blanshard during that year. My final 45 page term paper on “Freedom, Responsibility, and Obligation” later became the basis for my 345 page doctoral dissertation at Emory. (A much reduced in size version of it was later published as a book in 1969.) I also wrote another short paper for Blanshard titled “A Critique of Ross’s Hypothetical I Can.” Both of these papers defended “free will” and critiqued its opponents. Blanshard and Sir David Ross were complete determinist who totally rejected free will. I disagreed with both of them. My paper on Ross considered and critiqued one aspect of his attempt to reconcile determinism and ethics. The basic question was this. Since we are morally obligated to do only what we actually can do, how can this be reconciled with the determinist’s insistence that we can choose to do the right thing only if fully determinate causal conditions make it necessary for us to do it? What if they don’t?

Blanshard was so learned, brilliant, and sophisticated that most graduate students in his classes at Yale were overwhelmed and intimidated by him, and he really did not suffer fools lightly or gladly. I was also intimidated by him, but I stood up to and argued with him on the free will and other philosophical issues. I also asked what he seemed to regard as good questions in class. For some mysterious reason he liked and respected me, despite our disagreements. After reading my “A Critique of Ross’s Hypothetical I Can” paper, which also touched on his own position, Blanshard suggested that I submit it to Gilbert Ryle in England, then the editor of *Mind*, to see if he would publish it. At the time, *Mind* was the most respected and prestigious philosophy journal in the world. Most of the faculty in the Philosophy Department at Yale probably had never published in *Mind*. To my astonishment, Ryle accepted my paper and published it in 1960—my first published article of what is now over a hundred professional articles and reviews.

I received a letter of acceptance from Gilbert Ryle while I was a senior at the Divinity School. Blanshard lived just a few blocks behind the Divinity School. After reading Ryle’s letter of acceptance, I rashly went to Blanshard’s home and knocked on his door to show Ryle’s letter to

him. He welcomed me, was delighted with the news, and even invited me to come inside for a visit—something I never expected! But I did visit with him for a while. I don't remember what we discussed other than that he wanted to know more about me, and I wanted to know more about him. This was the high point of my Divinity School career! (After finishing Yale Divinity School, philosophy had won, thanks largely to Hartshorne and Blanshard, and I became a philosopher, not a theologian.)

I will not try here to explain my position on free will or my critique of determinists like Sir David Ross and Blanshard. Free will is not a topic for this discussion. To be discussed will be Hartman and Blanshard on Reason, Ethical Relativism, and Intrinsic Goodness.

Hartman and Blanshard as Rationalists

Brand Blanshard wrote and published many books that explained and applied “Reason.”¹ Hartman wrote and published much less on reason as such, but the two of them were fundamentally in agreement in rejecting philosophical relativism and subjectivism, and in striving for rational answers to the problems of philosophy, especially those of ethics and value theory. Somewhere during the 20th Century, rationality and philosophical truth went out of vogue with most professional philosophers, and this may help explain why both Blanshard and Hartman have been so completely ignored by most philosophy professionals. Both of them searched rationally for truth, knowledge, and goodness. During their era, various forms of what we might broadly call “subjectivism” were in vogue. Over the decades, these took many forms.

Pragmatists contended that the primary goal of philosophical reasoning is practice or action, but Blanshard and Hartman both thought that its primary goal is knowledge or truth about goodness, ultimate reality, knowing, and other traditional philosophical issues. Beliefs work because they are true, because they accurately describe or denote their object of reference; they are not true merely because they work. Existentialists insisted that our beliefs and actions, including our moral ones, be nothing more than “authentic,” i.e. deliberately, self-consciously, and freely chosen, with great passion; but they did not require any hard reasoning or clear thinking about them, and some even advocated the adoption of “absurd” beliefs. Logical Positivists gave up on philosophical beliefs altogether, insisting that all are meaningless and incapable of being true or false. To Emotivist-Positivists, ethical and broader axiological beliefs are nothing more than statements or expressions of feelings and emotions. Only empirically verified or verifiable statements, those coming from the natural sciences, are meaningful and capable of being true or false. Logical Positivists eventually put themselves out of business; what was left for them to do once they had thrown out most of traditional philosophy? Their answer was that philosophers could still help scientists figure out what they really meant by their concepts and propositions. They soon found out that scientists weren't interested in and did not need their help. Ordinary Language Philosophers insisted that the only measly thing philosophers could do is to try to understand what we ordinarily mean in everyday language by what we are saying. They mistakenly insisted that trying to think more deeply than that is pointless, indeed impossible. Blanshard and Hartman both

¹ Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, 2 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1940; *Reason and Goodness*, New York: Macmillan, 1961; *Reason and Analysis*, LaSalle, IL, Open Court, 1973; *Reason and Belief*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.

proved them wrong. In psychology, Metaphysical Behaviorists were consciously denying the reality of consciousness, and many other Psychologists and Sociologists proclaimed that all common and philosophical beliefs are nothing more than manifestations of social influences and conventions, so there is no real truth in them. Did this include their own pronouncements? If not, why not?

Such philosophical and intellectual fads largely but not completely prevailed among professional philosophers and many others during much of the 20th Century. Blanshard thoroughly examined and decisively refuted every such variety of subjectivism in his many books, but very few philosophy professionals ever read them, just as very few ever read Robert Hartman's works. Hartman also rejected philosophical relativism and subjectivism. I will not explain Blanshard's telling refutations of them here. Just read his books!

Hartman himself spent less time and effort than Blanshard on refuting subjectivist theories. Both Robert Hartman and Brand Blanshard took a much more traditional approach to the problems of philosophy, particularly those of moral philosophy. Hartman would have agreed with Blanshard that philosophy, including value theory, has a real subject matter, that its statements really can be true or false, that its primary objective is to search for knowledge and truth, and that such searches must involve deep, clear, coherent, insightful, logical, rational thinking, based, where relevant, on experience or other rational evidences, and ultimately on fundamental axioms or basic beliefs. Reasonable beliefs are based on information available through our natural faculties or capacities, but not on divine revelations. Reasonable people do not necessarily reject revelations, though Blanshard did; yet, they recognize that this is a different game, and those who appeal to revelations would agree. (But how do we know which revelations, or which interpretations of them, to accept?) Reasonable people give reasons, arguments, and evidences for what they believe and against what they do not believe. They think both critically and constructively. They even think critically and constructively about their own beliefs. They are always willing to re-examine everything in light of further evidence, more experience, clearer ideas, deeper or more penetrating thinking, and more creative insight. They strive for intellectual clarity, honesty, integrity, and impartiality or fair mindedness. Innumerable examples of rational searches for beliefs and justifiable practices can be found in the teachings and writings of both Blanshard and Hartman.

About reason, Hartman wrote, "Our definition of man will be the time-honored "man is a rational being." By "rational" we mean the capacity to combine concepts with objects, which is really the capacity to find one's way in this world by representing it to oneself, that is, by giving names to material objects and interrelating the names."² Thinking critically about this, Hartman's initial definition of "rational" is very skimpy, minimalistic, and incomplete. For one thing, it says nothing about reasoning itself except that it involves concepts, but even subjectivists like logical positivists and emotivists employ concepts. It says nothing about rational methodology or evidence-giving procedures. Its scope is far too narrow to be adequate. Also, rationality considers concepts of both "material objects" like "chairs" and "cars" and immaterial objects like "axioms" and "good." Reason does not limit itself to thinking only about "material objects," as Hartman affirmed here. An examination of what he did and said in his writings and teachings shows that

² Robert S. Hartman, *The Structure of Value*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967, 116-117.

Hartman actually had and employed a much more inclusive understanding of “rational” and its methodology. Look especially at his explanation of “The Value of a Value Theory,”³ and his understanding of “real science,” which I explain in some detail in *The Essentials of Formal Axiology*.⁴

In some ways, Blanshard’s discussions of “rationality” were more helpful and illuminating than Hartman’s, but Hartman would not disagree with Blanshard about any of the following. The “one commitment” of the philosopher, Blanshard said, “is to being as rational as possible.”⁵ Rational philosophical thinking is not just random talking or “BS.” It has a definite goal, to discover and know the truth. Its pursuit of that goal is structured or guided by a rational methodology that seeks clarity of meaning, thinks logically, gives evidences, avoids contradictions, makes deductive and inductive inferences, takes account of experiences, and integrates all beliefs with other beliefs in mutually supporting ways within a more and more comprehensive worldview. Blanshard wrote that philosophical “thought has a special end of its own. What it wants is to *know*. It is in essence a pursuit of truth.”⁶ “The business of the philosopher, as of the scientist, is to see things as they are...Philosophy is the persistent attempt to understand the nature of things by the exercise of reason.”⁷ “But of all the questions that inquiry can raise, the one most interesting to the philosopher is Why?”⁸ Appealing to experience, being guided by logic, giving reasons, avoiding contradictions, and striving for overall systematic coherence and completeness are integral to the methodology of reason. Blanshard insisted that logic is not merely a conventional and optional conceptual construct, as Logical Positivists claimed. It is deeply embedded within both human nature and the universe. He wrote, “The rules of logic are at work in one’s mind long before one has sat is a logic class of heard of the syllogism.”⁹ He also said, “I defend coherence as both the test and the nature of truth [and] contend that truth is a matter of degree.”¹⁰ All being and knowing exists within and are made possible by coherent relations, among other things. Blanshard recognized that historically “reason” has meant many different things, and that his own usage of it was somewhat variable. But we now have a good sense of what Blanshard himself understood “reason” to mean. Obviously, “reason” is much more than just combing concepts with objects, as Hartman first defined it. Even irrationalists and subjectivists can do that.

For real philosophers, rationality is indispensable. Blanshard expressed deep regret that so few ordinary people have or try to fulfill the (systemic) self-concept of being a reasonable person. Of course, there is much more to life than that alone, as he would readily agree.

³ Ibid., 295-302.

⁴ Rem B. Edwards, *The Essentials of Formal Axiology*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010, 83-85. Hartman aspired to proceed rationally from a *philosophy* of values to a *science* of values, but I do not think that he succeeded, as explained on these cited pages. So, I regard Hartman as a very accomplished philosopher, but not as a scientist, of value.

⁵ Brand Blanshard, in *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard*, Paul Arthur Schilpp, ed., LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1980, 96.

⁶ Ibid., 127.

⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁸ Ibid., 128.

⁹ Ibid., 134.

¹⁰ Ibid., 152.

Traditionally, the “subject matter” of philosophy was thought to be the most fundamental truths about reality, knowledge, and values. Both Blanshard and Hartman were deeply involved in discovering such truths. Interestingly, however, Blanshard denied that philosophy has any distinctive subject matter of its own on the grounds that every intellectual discipline is concerned in its own way with reality, knowledge, and values.¹¹ (I would suggest, with Aristotle, that scientists are usually not involved with problems and truths as broad and fundamental as those that concern philosophers.)

Hartman definitely would have appreciated Blanshard’s, “I may suggest two conclusions... first that value judgments are really judgments and not exclamations or imperatives merely, and second, that their validation is not wholly unlike the process of rational or logical explanation.”¹² I do not agree with many of the conclusions to which Blanshard came in his own attempts to be reasonable about reality, knowledge, human values, etc.,¹³ but I do agree, as Hartman would, that attempts to create a rationally based ethics, and an even broader axiology and general worldview, involve real and meaningful judgments capable of being true or false, and that validating a value theory really is a “process of rational or logical explanation,” as Blanshard put it. Hartman affirmed, “This implies that *value is rational*. I can value a thing only if I know it, that is, if I know its name and its properties. That this is true is confirmed by the fact that when we want to value something precisely we call in an expert. The difference between him and us is that he *knows* more about the thing than we do.”¹⁴

Both Blanshard and Hartman recognized that rational explanation always appeals at some point to fundamentals that cannot be further explained, mostly because they must be used to explain anything and everything else. Usually, all attempts to justify them presuppose them. Blanshard often cited the “principle of contradiction” as a clear example of this. He wrote that “to leave the law of contradiction behind is to leap out of intelligibility into gibberish.”¹⁵ Hartman would have agreed, and he identified his own axiom of axiology as an instance of a fundamental belief that cannot be substantiated by anything more fundamental than itself. Beliefs in the reality of a universe beyond our own personal experiences, in the uniformity of nature, in the reality of the past, and in other minds besides our own have been cited by others as examples of beliefs that are philosophically basic or fundamental.

Both Hartman and Blanshard realized that all philosophical arguments, evidences, and efforts to understand eventually reach and rest on rock bottom beginning points that are not derived from or “proved” by anything else beyond themselves. There is no such thing as endless or infinite sets or regresses of proofs of proofs of proofs... Hartman would call a rock bottom starting point an “axiom.” Many philosophers have discussed the topic of “basic” or “foundational” beliefs, what Hartman might have called “axioms.” Some of our beliefs are indeed so basic that they cannot be

¹¹ Ibid., 211-216.

¹² Ibid., 129.

¹³ For example, I do not agree with Blanshard’s determinism, his insistence on the causal and logical necessity of everything, his reduction of particulars and individuals to sets of universals, or his timeless, changeless, and amoral Absolute. Reason and experience point me toward a radically different worldview. But all of these issues lie far beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁴ Hartman, *The Structure of Value*, 109, 110.

¹⁵ Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard*, 172.

“proved” by deducing or inferring them from other even more fundamental beliefs. In this sense, they are accepted on the basis of “faith,” i.e. without further proof. The most obvious examples are the principle of contradiction itself (that a proposition cannot be both true and false in exactly the same sense at the same time) and its metaphysical counterpart (that a reality cannot at the same time both be and not be exactly what it is). Blanshard did not know about Hartman’s “axiom” of axiology—that “good means concept fulfillment,” but Hartman clearly presupposed and agreed with Blanshard about the inescapability of the principle of contradiction.

St. Anselm said that his ultimate theological argument or axiom involved “faith seeking understanding,” not “understanding seeking faith.” All philosophers are involved with faith seeking understanding because all philosophical arguments and efforts to understand eventually reach rock bottom on one or more beliefs that rest on nothing else beyond themselves. These most basic beliefs are used to illuminate, explain, and understand everything, but they rest on nothing else deeper than themselves. Hartman would call these “axioms.”

Maybe that is what St. Anselm meant by “faith seeking understanding,” or at least Hartman thought so, and so do I. Some reasonable beliefs are indeed accepted on the basis of “faith,” i.e. without further proof. Hartman’s axiom of goodness and his most basic applications of it (the three dimensions of value) do not seem to be quite as basic and inescapable as the principle of contradiction, but they have greater explanatory power than anything else available in value theory. Blanshard thought many other basic philosophical beliefs are immediately recognized as such and are intuitively “self-evident,” for example, “Extreme happiness is intrinsically more desirable than extreme misery,”¹⁶ and “Knowledge is better than ignorance is also not demonstrative, though it does seem to me necessary.”¹⁷ Though highly controversial, Blanshard occasionally appealed to “self-evidence” as a legitimate function of reason.

If all reasonable beliefs rest ultimately on very abstract basic principles that cannot be derived from anything more basic, and in that sense are not and cannot be “proved,” does this mean that all of philosophy and rationality properly understood are based after all on blind faith and not on reason? Blanshard’s thoughts about this are very illuminating.

I have sometimes spoken of my rationalism as a faith. And a faith it is, in the sense that one cannot prove it. Any attempt to demonstrate that logic holds of the nature of things must appeal at every step to the objective validity of the logic that is under scrutiny, and hence can only beg the question. Nevertheless the rationalist’s appeal to faith is very far from that of religion, with which it has sometimes been equated. There is nothing obviously necessary in an appeal to the existence of the Jewish or Christian God or the Hindu Brahma; and such faith may be either taken or left without disaster to the intellectual edifice in which one lives. But the faith of the rationalist, at least in its essentials, is a faith that is natural and even unavoidable. That the world is a place that we can learn about by rational thought is a position which, though incapable of proof, is so central to all experience that without

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

it we could not take one step of reflection or perception. Such a faith is not a leap beyond the evidence, but the acceptance of an imperative imposed by the nature of though itself.¹⁸

Blanshard thought that faith in rationality is an imperative imposed by the nature of reality itself, including human nature. Logical Positivists, and their remnants today, insist that logic and math are nothing more than linguistic “conventions,” which suggests that there are many alternatives. The trouble is, very few “conventions” actually work (give us truth); most don’t. An appropriate logic or mathematics works because reality is logically and mathematically structured or ordered. Many today are amazed that math and logic are so successful in explaining and comprehending the universe. The best way to account for this is that there is an actual match between them of some kind. This does not mean that reality simply *is* math and logic, but it does mean that reality as such is logically and mathematically organized. Mere conventions can fly off in many directions, but “alternative realities” just aren’t real.

Yes, it is important that the right math and logic be used, those that match reality. Alternative formal systems seem relevant today when dealing with the most abstruse and unresolved issues in cosmology and the natural sciences, but they are usually just irrelevant. Politicians, if no one else, should have convinced us by now that “alternative realities” just are not real, they do not exist, there is no rational evidence for them, all rational evidence is against them, math and logic do not support them, and we should not affirm them. This isn’t just a matter of formal conventions. Rationality and math do not support fanciful “realities” because such things just aren’t there. But reason, logic, and math can help know the actual world in which we live and move and have our being. As Hartman said, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating,”¹⁹ by which he meant in its successful applications. Some philosophical beliefs accurately describe the realities to which they refer; some don’t. Rationality works, i.e., it yields knowledge and truth, even about goodness. Or at least it can move us in the right directions.

So, how much can we realistically expect from the very best, the most thoroughly reasonable, of our philosophers? As a philosopher, my own hopes and expectations have been “fallibilistic” ever since I first read Charles Sanders Peirce as an undergraduate at Emory in the 1950s. Fallibilists hold that we should try to be as reasonable as humanly possible about our philosophical (and other) beliefs, but they recognize that beyond our best theoretical efforts lie unfathomed mysteries, uncertainties, and darkness. Our very best human efforts to find reasonable worldviews that are supported by strong evidence never seem to reach absolute truths and certainties, but they can push back the darkness. Equally competent reasonable persons actually do disagree. Reaching universal intersubjective philosophical agreement will always be an unattained ideal. Those procedures and methodologies that we call “rational” may not be sufficiently powerful to bring all thoroughly competent and reasonable persons into agreement. There will always be ample room for honest philosophical differences on very controversial issues. Also, human dispositions and cognitive shortcomings account for many of our sustained philosophical differences. As Blanshard observed, with respect to standards of rationality, “The issue is not one of what men in fact do but of what

¹⁸ Ibid., 159.

¹⁹ Hartman, *The Structure of Value*, 294.

they ought to do.”²⁰ Both Blanshard and Hartman recognized that our very best efforts only approximate definitive knowledge and truthfulness. Neither claimed finality for their philosophizing. According to Blanshard, achieving truth is always a matter of “degree,” as already noted, and “Minds equally devoted to reason may disagree profoundly, for being reasonable is one of the hardest things in the world.”²¹ Yet, in his “ethics of belief” he was not completely comfortable with admitting this.²²

While making a presentation to a philosophical society in 1972, Hartman was asked if his axiology might soon become “obsolete.” His reply was, “What Professor [Marvin] Katz says is certainly true—that axiology will be obsolete—I hope the sooner the better—because if this system has any dynamic in it, it should be overcome within at least a generation, or, at most a generation.”²³ Hartman regarded even his own best philosophical thinking as only a starting point that would soon be transformed into something better, and he challenged his colleagues and students to make improvements where needed. He also recognized that only in theory is his axiology rationally objective, thus “valid for every rational being whatever;” but in application it is always subjective.²⁴ Some of his former students and colleagues have made significant improvements in Hartman’s system. Hartman himself would have done this were it not for his very premature death.

Rejecting Moral Relativism

Both Hartman and Blanshard rejected ethical relativism, the view, as Blanshard put it, “that morals are only relative, that there is hardly a moral rule accepted by one culture that is not rejected in others, and that to claim for any practice that it is the right one, or even that it is better than some rival, is dogmatism.”²⁵ Such a view was widely endorsed by many sociologists and philosophers of the 20th Century and is still widely held today. To many intellectuals and others, “A belief in objective standards in ethics seemed old-fashioned and provincial. The facts of moral diversity brought to light by the social scientists had disposed of such claims once for all.”²⁶

Blanshard brought all of his philosophical insight and brilliance to bear in developing his replies to ethical relativism. His main argument was that ethical relativism rests almost entirely on a confusion between means and ends. This requires some explanation.

All social scientists and moral relativists acknowledge that every society exemplifies socially promulgated, taught, and enforced rules of behavior designed to enable their members to live in relative harmony, collaboration, happiness, and well-being with one another. No human society exists, or even could exist, without such rules. Blanshard thought that behavioral rules, found everywhere, exist as means to the common human ends of preserving and sustaining social orders

²⁰ Schilpp, *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard*, 933, 939.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 218.

²² For a much more thorough examination of Blanshard’s ethics of belief, see Frederick Ferré, “Blanshard on Reason and Religious Belief,” in Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard*, 914ff. See Blanshard’s reply, 930ff.

²³ Cited in Rem B. Edwards, ed., *Formal Axiology and Its Critics*, Amsterdam – Atlanta: Rodopi, 1995, 52.

²⁴ Hartman, *The Structure of Value*, 110, 251.

²⁵ Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard*, 163. Past tense verbs have been changed to the present tense in this quote.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

and enabling members to live in relative peace, harmony, social cohesion, happiness, fulfillment, and well-being. But there are innumerable ways to do this successfully. Our way isn't the only way. The only real questions are about (1) whether certain very *general and universal ends* are or would be served in diverse ways by *particular* but diverse behavioral rules, and (2) just how diverse such rules actually are.

(1) Blanshard insisted that moral relativism is wrong, in part because it conflates the admitted diversity of *particular behavioral rules* in different societies with universal and non-diverse general human *ends, goals, or objectives*, toward which such particulars serve as diverse means. Relativists lump everything under the heading of "diversity," but this actually applies at best only to *particular* rules, Blanshard explained. To relativists who touted complete and universal behavioral diversity, Blanshard replied at some length, as follows:

This I disbelieved. Even the reports of diversity rested, I thought, on a confusion of means and ends. I followed Sidgwick in thinking that moral rules were means gradually adopted by a group because they led to desirable results; its members would obviously profit if a respect for truth, persons, and property could be made to prevail. Now the rules adopted by different societies did vary dramatically, as the sociologists said. The nineteenth-century Chinese paid homage to their fathers, while the nineteenth-century Fijians, when their fathers showed signs of senility, put them to death. Spaniards believed in monogamy, Moslems in polygamy, Tibetans in polyandry. But if moral practices are really means to ends, it does not follow that because practices differ the ends men are seeking to attain by them differ likewise. Closer study of the Fijians revealed that they were not as indifferent to their elders' welfare as their apparently unfeeling custom suggested; indeed, holding the belief that one carried into the next world the complement of powers with which one left the present world, they considered that the dispatching of parents before they lost their powers was a far-seeing service to them. Again, diverse marriage customs may in different circumstances contribute to the same human ends. Where the numbers of the sexes equal, the general happiness may be best promoted by monogamy; where men outnumber women as a result of female infanticide or other causes, this happiness may be better attained by polyandry; and where the reverse is the case, or women are economically helpless, polygamy may supply the best means to the same results.²⁷

Note that Blanshard is not claiming that people in diverse societies always live up to and never violate the particular rules and ideals of their social order, or that there is never any room for improving particular practices in ways that would better serve general human ends. He is not claiming that existing practices everywhere distribute the chief ends of life fairly to everyone. Clearly, some socially enforced practices distribute these primary human ends primarily to those in power, and little if any to social subordinates, inferiors, and outsiders, *but the ends are the same even then*. Powerful insiders everywhere still want to preserve and sustain the social practices that enable themselves and their closely associated insiders to live in relative peace, harmony, social cohesion, happiness, fulfillment, and well-being.

²⁷ Ibid., 163.

(2) Blanshard's second argument against moral relativism was that particular social practices are not and could not be endlessly diverse, as relativists intimate. Everywhere, rules and practices are limited by common or universal human ends. Universal but general human ends set definite limits to diversity, but this is not recognized by moral relativists. Again, allow Blanshard to speak for himself.

Far more significant than this diversity of practices, interesting as it is, would be the discovery that the diverse practices were directed toward identical ends. And I believe that this latter is substantially true, though it is not the sort of thesis that readily lends itself to observation or statistics. Sane men everywhere want to be happy. Though the love of knowledge may...be the faintest of human passions it is universally present; who would not choose, if the choice were open to him, to understand the world about him rather than be ignorant of it? All men seem to prefer pleasure to intense pain; some degree of order, beauty, and comfort to disorder, filth, and misery; health of mind and body to disease, security to fear and anxiety, friendship to general hatred by their kind. It is not very likely that what makes life worth living to a Russian would be without interest to a Chinese or an American. I will begin to believe the intrinsic goods of life differ from culture to culture when I hear that in the United Nations a Russian has risen to plead for a new treaty on the ground that it will increase the ignorance or unhappiness of his people, or that a Chinese has begged for aid in promoting cholera or idiocy in his homeland. If such a development seems absurd, it is because the major ends that men are seeking, like the major ends they seek to avoid, are the same the world over. Indeed that is why discussions in the United Nations is possible at all. Discussion about means is feasible when the question is what means will best promote a common end, but there is no ground for decision if the ends and standards themselves differ. Fortunately, men are more deeply unified by their community of ends than they are divided by the diversity of means. What is important morally is not these differing means, which are plastic to change, but the intrinsic goods that set their dominant and lasting aims.²⁸

Blanshard's telling objections to moral relativism are clear enough, but was relativism also a matter of concern to Hartman and later axiologists? The answer is, "Yes." The focus of Hartman and later Hartmaniacs in confronting moral relativism has been narrower than that of Blanshard. Axiologists approach relativism with the aim of showing the widespread but not absolute acceptance both of Hartman's three dimensions of value and of his hierarchy of value according to which intrinsic goods are ranked higher than extrinsic goods, and both are ranked higher than systemic goods. Hartman knew that these main features of his system have great explanatory power and fruitfulness for further development, but he was also concerned that they be validated empirically; he wanted to show that "the theory corresponds to practice." The "Hartman Value Profile" was the instrument by which such correspondence, or the lack of it, could be determined factually. He wrote, "The statistical validation has to verify whether the theory corresponds to practice, whether, in actuality, the majority of people do value as the theory predicts; in particular,

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 163-164.

whether in the majority of actual value judgments the items of the test follow in the actual order of the test.”²⁹ Note that the empirical validity of Hartman’s system rests only on majority but not universal agreement.

In his *The Hartman Value Profile (HVP) Manual of Interpretation*, Hartman cited a small number of HVP studies, mostly from the United States, that provide strong evidence that people do indeed have intrinsic, extrinsic, and systemic values, and that the majority of them do indeed rank them as his theoretical system prescribes.³⁰ Later, Leon Pomeroy did very extensive and detailed cross-cultural studies with numerous subjects in Russia, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, and the United States. He tracked and compared specific HVP scoring scales in detail. In Pomeroy’s two lengthy chapters on cross-national studies, he reported that significant differences as well as similarities exist among and within these groups, but he also confirmed that on the whole in their reflective moments most people everywhere do regard individual persons as having intrinsic worth, that they also have both extrinsic and systemic values, and that generally though not universally a majority of people worldwide rank the worth of individual persons higher than they rank extrinsic and systemic objects of value.³¹

So, both Blanshard and Hartmanian axiology identify universally present and valid general ends or values that refute axiological/ethical relativism, while acknowledging the presence of diversity in particular expressions of and means to these ends.

How does Blanshard’s special emphasis on happiness (prolonged pleasure) and fulfillment as universally valid ends relate to Hartman’s special emphasis on individual persons as universally valid ends? Think about this for a while. To this problem we will return in the next section.

Intrinsic Goods

With respect to the meaning of “good” itself, and “intrinsically good” more specifically, there are very significant differences between Blanshard and Hartman. This section will try to show that Hartman’s treatment of both was far superior to Blanshard’s. I doubt that Blanshard knew much about Hartman and his work. To my knowledge, he never cited Hartman in any of his publications. Hartman, by contrast, did know about Blanshard. He cited Blanshard’s *Reason and Goodness* in three endnotes in *The Structure of Value*, and he suggested in the third that the two of them corresponded at least once in 1957.³² Hartman’s absence from *Reason and Goodness* is perhaps best explained by the fact that it was published in 1960, but *The Structure of Value* was not published until 1967.

Difficulties with Blanshard’s position will be treated here under two headings, (1) his lack of a general or inclusive definition of “good,” and (2) his inadequate answer to the question, “What things are intrinsically good?”

²⁹ Robert S. Hartman, *The Hartman Value Profile (HVP) Manual of Interpretation*, Robert S. Hartman Institute, 1973, 2006, 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41, 43, 61-62.

³¹ Leon Pomeroy, *The New Science of Axiological Psychology*, Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2005, Chs. 16 and 17.

³² Hartman, *The Structure of Value*, 334 n. 5, 338 n 12, and 341 n.46.

(1) Surprisingly, as careful as he usually was about such things, Blanshard had no general theoretical or intensional definition of “good.” A. C. Ewing pointed out that “He has however left a question unanswered, namely what account can be given of the intensional meaning, and it seems to me a much more vital question than he thinks.”³³ Blanshard was interested in and wrote only about “intrinsic goodness,” and he completely ignored all commonplace non-moral uses of the term in everyday discourse. We actually use “good” non-morally or non-intrinsically much more frequently than we do morally or intrinsically. We are not making moral or intrinsic judgments when we talk about good cars, good farmland, good computers, good lumber, good hammers, good lipstick, good books, good whiskey, good beer, good steaks, good ideas, and so on, almost endlessly. Even when we talk about good people, we are usually not making moral or intrinsic worth judgments about them. Nothing like that is intended when we speak or think of people as good workers, good cooks, good teachers, good pilots, good politicians, good Democrats, good writers, and so on indefinitely. There are significant differences between the questions, “What is the meaning of “good”?” and “What is the meaning of “intrinsically good”?” and also between “What things are good?” and “What things are intrinsically good?” Blanshard failed to see this.

Hartman, by contrast, created the most insightful, inclusive, useful, fruitful, and illuminating general theoretical definition of “good” available to anyone anywhere. He sought, found, and defined Plato’s “form of the good” as no one else before him had ever done. Hartman’s definition covers everything—all of the above, every intrinsic, extrinsic, systemic good, and everything else if there is such. “Good,” said Hartman, means “concept (or standard) fulfillment.”³⁴ This formal definition is not naturalistic. It does not appeal to any specific descriptive properties. Its meaning is not immediately obvious, but it has been explained in print many times.³⁵ In brief, it means that if anything is good, it actually has all of the properties that it is ideally supposed to have. It actually exemplifies all of the good-making properties that things like that are ideally expected to have. So, to decide if anything is good practically, morally, or in any other way, or if it is useless, or non-moral, etc., we must first clarify and identify the properties it is ideally expected to have, then apply its relevant ideal to it. If it measures up to ideal expectations, if experiences, experts, or other evidences, confirm that it really has all of its ideal good-making properties³⁶ then it is indeed good;

³³ Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard*, 227.

³⁴ Hartman’s own exposition of his formal definition of “good” is explained in much more clarity and depth in his own article titled “A Moral Science for the Atomic Age” that is published at the end of this issue of this Journal. Many additional ideas of Hartman referenced in my present article are also explained in much more detail in his own words in his own article.

I would like to point out one important thing about the wording of his formal definition of “good” in “A Moral Science for the Atomic Age.” There he says, “A thing is good if it fulfills its definition.” In his late writings this would have been reworded to say that “A thing is good if it fulfills its concept.” His “definition” wording appears all the way through the initial hardback edition of *The Structure of Value*, 1967, which came out a number of months before the paperback edition. In the paperback edition, he changed the wording from “definition” to “concept.” He made this change because I pointed out to him in person that he says very clearly in *The Structure of Value* that the goodness of everything depends entirely on its “expositional” properties, and *definitely not* on its “definitional” properties (177-178). To be just what it is, every good thing must fit or actualize its minimal definition, but every good thing also has many additional properties, and *its ideal “good-making” properties to be “fulfilled” are located entirely within the “expositional” properties of its even broader “concept.”*

³⁵ See Rem B. Edwards, *The Essentials of Formal Axiology*, Ch. 1.

³⁶ There is a very important problem about how the “good-making properties” of anything are ever selected in the first place. This is too complicated to address here, but see Edwards, *The Essentials of Formal Axiology*, 100-102.

if it does not, it is less than good. If it exemplifies only some but not all of its ideal properties it may still have fair, average, poor, etc. degrees of positive worth. Hartman's theoretical definition works everywhere on everything.

Many if not most philosophers and non-philosophers commonly use the term "good" without defining it. G. E. Moore set the stage in 1903 for most of the axiological and ethical theorizing that took place in the 20th century and beyond, especially with respect to finding the meaning of "good." Both Blanshard and Hartman were influenced by Moore in many ways. Moore contended that "good" referred to a very real "non-natural" quality that could be experienced but not defined. This indefinable quality of "good" could be experienced; it sticks to some things, good things, but not to others, Moore claimed. Blanshard objected, "I could find no clear content in it apart from the good-making characteristics themselves. So I concluded that the goodness of all intrinsically good experiences reduced to these two factors in alliance, their being fulfilling of human nature and their carrying with them that tone of pleasure or happiness that was the normal by-product of such fulfillment."³⁷ Neither Blanshard nor Hartman could find this indefinable quality in their own experience, but from that point on they went their separate ways. Blanshard just failed to define good as such at all; he conflated "good" with "intrinsic good." Hartman did define "good" formally, as already explained. Hartman succeeded; Blanshard failed.

(2) Instead of trying to define "good" inclusively, as did Hartman, Blanshard concentrated only on defining "intrinsic goodness," but again he got it wrong. The two defining features of "intrinsic goodness," Blanshard claimed, are *fulfillment and happiness (prolonged pleasure)*. He wrote,

Goodness or value exists only in the realm of experience. And when an experience is intrinsically good, it will always be found to have two characteristics. In the first place, it will be the fulfillment of some impulse or drive of human nature...So far, the intrinsic values of an experience will be the function of its fulfilling character, of its realizing some capacity and urge of human nature.

Is this the only condition of intrinsic goodness? It seemed to me clear that there was another, the element which Mill and Sidgwick had found the sole condition, namely pleasure...But though it is not a sufficient condition, the hedonic element, which I preferred to call satisfaction, was still a necessary condition of intrinsic value.³⁸

In sum, Blanshard found "in the fulfillment of human nature and the satisfaction that accompanied it the very essence of goodness."³⁹ He *defined goodness, i.e., intrinsic goodness, as consisting only of two natural or descriptive properties, fulfillment and pleasure*. Both elements are essential together; neither will do in the absence of the other, he explained.

Philosophical difficulties with Blanshard's position abound. I will not attempt to cover them all.⁴⁰ Since most readers of this article will not be professional philosophers, I will cover only a few such difficulties, and then only briefly.

³⁷ Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard*, 239.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁰ For a much more complete critique of Blanshard, see Alfred C. Ewing, "Blanshard's View of Good," in *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard*, 222-236.

First, Blanshard defined a basic value concept in purely descriptive terms, thus deliberately committing, he admitted, what G. E. Moore called the “naturalistic fallacy.” Moore would say to Blanshard that “intrinsically good” does not *mean* “fulfilling and pleasant” because asking “Are fulfillment and pleasant good?” is not a “self-answering” question, as it would be if their meanings were identical. Blanshard’s position actually confuses answers to the question, “What does “intrinsically good” mean?” with answers to, “What things are intrinsically good?”

Second, are all instances of fulfillment and enjoyment intrinsically good? Surely there is more to intrinsic goodness than fulfillment and pleasure, and surely not all instances of fulfillment and pleasure are integral parts of intrinsic goodness. Some qualifications are needed. Clearly, some of our natural human drives are both morally and inherently undesirable. By degrees, all human beings, e.g., you and me, are naturally disposed toward selfishness, hatred, malice, revenge or retaliation (an eye for an eye), dominance over others, and a tribalism that ignores, depreciates, or excludes inferiors and outsiders. And we take great pleasure in fulfilling these nasty potentials. Only our desirable, but not our undesirable, drives and enjoyments should be actualized, but how do we distinguish between them? Additional good (and bad) making properties are required for this.

A. C. Ewing objected that many human fulfillments and pleasures or satisfactions are intrinsically bad, not intrinsically good. Ewing asked Blanshard, “But what about fulfillments which are not good but evil? Till near his death Hitler seems to have been highly successful in fulfilling his nature. He had a strongly developed disposition to hate the Jews and others and so bring evil upon them. His acts fulfill this disposition thoroughly and he probably got great satisfaction. But his fulfillment and satisfactions were evil and not good.”⁴¹ Ewing and other critics offered additional objections to Blanshard’s position, but this is enough for present purposes. Clearly, only those fulfillments and enjoyments that are carefully selected in accord with additional “good-making” criteria are morally acceptable, and perhaps they belong somehow and somewhere within our notion of “intrinsic goodness.” In his reply to Ewing, Blanshard reluctantly admitted that some fulfilling and enjoyable motives like malice just are inherently bad, not merely instrumentally so.⁴² Clearly, many enjoyable propensities of human nature should not be fulfilled or actualized, but how do we tell the difference between the good ones and the bad ones? More good-making properties are needed than Blanshard provided. (There are also bad-making properties, but neither Hartman nor Blanshard dealt adequately with that.)⁴³

Third, a general theoretical definition of the notion of “intrinsically good,” should be something like “desirable for its own sake” and not just “fulfilling and pleasant.”⁴⁴ “Intrinsic goodness” is commonly defined theoretically as “desirable in and of themselves,” or “desirable for their own sakes,” as opposed to being “desirable as a means to some end beyond themselves.” Blanshard gave little or no attention to useful or extrinsic goodness *as goodness*. It is indeed surprising that someone as astute as Blanshard missed this.

⁴¹ Ibid., 229.

⁴² Ibid., 241-242

⁴³ Hartman’s failure to deal with “bad-making properties” is explained in Edwards, *The Essentials of Formal Axiology*, 7-9.

⁴⁴ Ewing in *The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard*, 227.

Many other difficulties with Blanshard's understanding of intrinsic goodness were raised by Ewing and other critics. What follows is a fourth immensely important difficulty from an axiological perspective, one missed by most philosophical ethicists. This is perhaps the most significant difference between Blanshard and Hartman.

Fourth, even if we take Blanshard to be answering "What things are intrinsically good?" instead of "What does intrinsic goodness mean?" his answer is significantly different from Hartman's. Blanshard, like most other ethicists, held that only repeatable qualities, "universals" as philosophers would call them, have intrinsic worth. Human fulfillment and pleasure can and do occur over and over again. By contrast, Hartman's answer to "What things are intrinsically good?" was "individuals," not "universals." He thought that the only intrinsically good realities that are valuable in and of themselves for their own sakes are unique conscious persons, individuals like us, not merely a few repeatable qualities or properties within us. According to Hartman, only unique individual centers of conscious experiences, thinking, feeling, choosing, doing, etc., have intrinsic worth, are ends in themselves, are valuable for their own sakes. Yes, consciousness, experiencing, thinking, feeling, choosing, doing, etc. are themselves universals, but they are always located only within, and are uniquely configured and instantiated differently within, every individual person, (or animal, or God, etc.). Universals defining "human nature," whatever they are, are indeed present in each of us, but individuality is the essential thing about intrinsic goodness. This was missed by Blanshard and so many others. Every existing human being is unique and unrepeatable, even though we all share a common abstract human nature with all other persons. Our "humanity" can be completely defined in only a very few words (not easy to do), but a complete description of any individual person would require more words than anyone can practically write or count. We are not repeatable; universals are. In our full definiteness or concreteness, each of us exists only once in the entire history of our universe. Abstractions or universals like consciousness, enjoyment, and fulfillment alone do not confer intrinsic worth; uniqueness or individuality is also required.⁴⁵

Axiologically considered, defining intrinsic goodness in terms of repeatable universals like fulfillment and enjoyment confuses values that are "good for us" with values that are "good in themselves" or "for their own sakes," i.e., unique individuals. Fulfillment, enjoyment, humanity, etc., are "good for us" properties, but they are not "good for their own sakes" properties. There is no intelligible sense in which they even have "sakes." As such, abstracted from individuated awareness, fulfillment, pleasure, humanity, etc., do not know or care what they are. They have no value to themselves, no sakes of their own. They have value only in and for us. Many, many repeatable "good for us" properties do indeed enrich our lives—knowing, thinking, learning, sensing beauty, loving, choosing, doing, etc. So do many unique features and projects of our individuality and our particular station in life. They can be directly and immediately fulfilling to and enjoyed by us, but they are not valued by or to themselves. In practice, valuing ourselves and others intrinsically involves selective "self-realization" through time in many such ways.

Repeatable good-making properties within us are valuable only because individuals like us value them, only because they enrich the lives of unique persons or conscious beings like us. In

⁴⁵ For much more on the axiological meaning and significance of uniqueness or individuality, see Edwards, *The Essentials of Formal Axiology*, 49-67

our uniqueness, we are final ends, that is, valuable in, to and for ourselves or for our own sakes. *Repeatable properties are “good for us” values, not “intrinsic” values.* The buck stops with unique individuals like us (and animals, God, etc.)

If we dig deeply enough, there is much more to Blanshard’s definition of intrinsically good as fulfillment and pleasure than he realized. He prefaced his introduction of these two properties with the qualification, “Goodness or value exists only in the realm of experience.”⁴⁶ Thus, Blanshard gave us far more than he may have realized he was offering! On his own terms, at least three things, not just two, define intrinsic worth. On his own terms, it is *experiences of fulfillment and enjoyment* that have intrinsic worth. Clearly, even on his own terms, his two properties alone do not *define* “intrinsic worth.” “Experiences” are also required. Then what happens if we dig a little deeper into his third factor, experiences? Where does that take us? Well, it takes to a fourth essential, namely, “consciousness,” as Blanshard readily admitted.⁴⁷ G. E. Moore said that hedonists don’t really mean it when they say that only pleasure is intrinsically good; they really mean “the consciousness of pleasure, though they have not been at pains to say so.”⁴⁸ And where does consciousness, added to experience, fulfillment, and pleasure take us? To a fifth inescapable essential, “unique individuals.” All five of these are distinguishable in thought, but in reality, “good for us” properties like pleasure and fulfillment do not exist apart from consciousness and experience. Conscious experiences of anything, including enjoyment and self-realization, always exist only within, and are meaningful and valuable only in, to, and for unique individuals. Thus, with a slight bit of nudging, or a “deeper analysis” as philosophers might say, Blanshard’s position can be pushed toward Hartman’s, but overall it will look very different there!

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