

The Normative and the Evaluative:

The Buck-Passing Account of Value

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30 May 2018 – Pre-copy-editing

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1. Introduction

In this book I provide an account of the nature of goodness and value. According to the view that I motivate and defend, what it is for something to be good or valuable is just for there to be reasons for us to have positive attitudes towards that thing. What it is to be a good place to take a holiday is just to be a place that there are reasons to want to go on holiday to, to wish that one could take a holiday to, and to recommend to others who want to take a holiday. What it is for it to be good if we found a cure for cancer is just for there to be reasons for us to hope that we find a cure for cancer and to encourage research to find a cure. What it is for pleasure and friendship to be valuable is just for there to be reasons for us to want pleasure and friendship. And what it is for equality and liberty to be values is just for there to be reasons to desire, preserve, and promote liberty and equality.

Further facts *make it the case* that it would be good if we found a cure for cancer and that particular holiday resorts are good ones. A holiday resort might be a good one because of its stunning views, sandy beaches, quiet rooms, and tasty restaurants. And it would be good if we found a cure for cancer because of the lives this would save, the suffering this would avert, and the pleasure and well-being this would promote. But these facts about the particular ways in which these things are good are just the facts that are reasons to have pro-attitudes towards these things. For instance, the resort's stunning views and sandy beaches both make it a good resort and are the reasons to have pro-attitudes towards the resort. According to the view that I will motivate and defend in this book, the resort's being a good one just consists in its having other features that

give us reasons to have pro-attitudes towards it. Following T.M. Scanlon, I'll call the view I defend the *buck-passing account of value*.¹

The buck-passing account is not a substantive account of what things are good. So, it does not entail, or rule out, that happiness or desire-satisfaction is the only thing that is intrinsically good, or that a variety of things such as friendship, beauty, autonomy, and virtue are good for their own sake. Nor is the buck-passing account a view about whether facts about goodness and value are irreducibly normative or are in fact reducible to natural facts. So, the buck-passing account does not entail, nor rule out, that facts about goodness and value are facts about social conventions or that goodness or value is subjective in some other sense such as being just a matter of the norms that we accept. And similarly, the buck-passing account does not entail, nor rule out, that facts about goodness and value are facts that are more objective than this and outstrip facts about the attitudes that we actually have or would have in certain hypothetical circumstances.

¹ See Scanlon (1998, p. 97). Scanlon calls this account a buck-passing account because one of the intuitions that leads him to it is the intuition that goodness and value never provide reasons to have a pro-attitude towards anything; it is not the resort's goodness but its other features (its stunning views and sandy beaches) that are reasons to have pro-attitudes towards it (see §1.3 and §4.2 below). So, the 'normative reason-providing buck' is passed from goodness to other properties; see *ibid*. I use the buck-passing name because it is now firmly associated with the view that facts about value are just facts about reasons for pro-attitudes. And because, as I explain in §11, I believe that reasons are more fundamental and that we can extend the buck-passing account to provide an account of all of practical normativity in terms of reasons. So, it would be confusing for me to use the other name that accounts of value in terms of reasons in the literature are sometimes referred to by, the 'fitting-attitude accounts of value'.

The buck-passing account is instead an account of what we're talking about when we talk about something being good or valuable.² It is an account of the property that we are claiming that friendship has when we claim that friendship is good. And the property that we claim that equality has when we claim that it is a value. It is an account of what it is that hedonists and their opponents disagree about.

Many philosophers (including Kant, Rawls, Sidgwick, Brentano, Parfit, and Scanlon) have defended something like the buck-passing account.³ But very little has been done to explain why we should accept the buck-passing account over the views with which it competes.⁴ And responses to many of the objections that have been made to the account have not been provided. In this book I give the first comprehensive motivation and defence of the buck-passing account of value. And I also explain how it can be extended to provide an explanatorily fruitful and compelling account of morality and all of practical normativity in terms of normative reasons.

² This might suggest that the buck-passing account is a conceptual or semantic thesis. For a discussion of whether the buck-passing account is such a thesis see §1.5.2 below. But if the buck-passing account should be understood as only an account of the property of being good, then we can still say that the account is an account of the property that we're talking about when we talk about something being good.

³ See Kant (1996/1785, 4:413), Sidgwick (1981, pp. 109-112), Brentano (1969, p. 18), Frankena (1942, p. 100), Ewing (1947, pp. 148-152), Rawls (1971, p. 399), Chisholm, (1986, p. 52), Falk (1986, pp. 117-118), Kagan (1989, p. 60), Gaus (1990, p. 111, p.156, p. 167), Anderson (1993, pp. 1-2, p. 17), Lemos (1994, p. 12), Gibbard (1998, p. 241), Scanlon (1998, pp. 97-99), Parfit (2001) (2011a, pp. 38-41), Darwall (2004), Suikkanen (2005), Skorupski (2007) (2010), Stratton-Lake and Hooker (2006), Schroeder (2010), Way (2013). And for a discussion of the history of the view see Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004, pp. 394-400) and Suikkanen (2009, pp. 768-769).

⁴ See also Olson (2006) and Orsi (2013a). Way (2013) provides a notable exception.

In this chapter I introduce and explain the buck-passing account of value and explain the structure of the rest of this book in which I motivate (§2-5), defend (§6-9), and extend (§10-11) it. The buck-passing account analyses value in terms of normative reasons for pro-attitudes. In §1.1 I explain the notion of a normative reason for a pro-attitude and its component parts: the notion of a normative reason and the notion of a pro-attitude. In §1.2 I explain the varieties of goodness that the buck-passing account of value is an account of and I explain how the buck-passing account analyses these varieties of goodness. In §1.3 I sketch the attractions of and motivations for the buck-passing account. In §1.4 I provide an overview of the rest of the book. And in §1.5 I explain several further important details of the buck-passing account: how it provides an account of several distinctions in goodness and value (§1.5.1); and the status of the buck-passing account, that is, whether it is a metaphysical and/or conceptual thesis (§1.5.2).

1.1. Normative Reasons for Pro-attitudes

The buck-passing account analyses value in terms of normative reasons for pro-attitudes. Normative reasons to perform some action or have some attitude are reasons that *count in favour of* or *make a case for* that action or attitude. We might say that normative reasons for an action or attitude *justify* that action or attitude. Or we might say that normative reasons for an action or attitude make it the case that, other things equal, we ought to perform that action or have that attitude.⁵

Normative reasons are distinct from other types of reasons. Suppose that an extremely heavy but dangerous man is about to cross a rope bridge. If he crosses and the bridge collapses, the reason *why* the bridge collapsed would be that he crossed the bridge; this is an *explanatory reason*.

⁵ See Alvarez (2016).

But this would be no normative reason *for* the bridge to collapse; there can be no reasons *for* bridges to perform actions because bridges are incapable of intentional action. So the fact that the man crossed the bridge would not be a *normative reason for* the bridge to collapse. There might, however, be a reason *for* people on the other side to try to make the bridge collapse so that the heavy dangerous man cannot cross and hurt them; this is a normative reason for these people to collapse the rope bridge. Normative and explanatory reasons should be distinguished from motivating reasons. If the people on one side of the bridge made the bridge collapse, the *reason for which* they made the bridge collapse would be in order to stop the dangerous man crossing: this would have been their *motivating* reason. (Motivating reasons are sometimes understood as considerations that agents take to be normative reasons for doing things, we might more broadly think of our motivating reason for ϕ -ing as our motive for ϕ -ing; and motivating reasons provide a kind of explanation, but not the only kind of explanation, of why people do things).⁶

The buck-passing account doesn't analyse value in terms of normative reasons for *any* action or attitude: it analyses value in terms of normative reasons for *pro-attitudes*. Pro-attitudes encompass all attitudes and actions that we might think of as positive. To have a pro-attitude in response to someone or something is to, for instance, desire, respect, admire, promote, praise, commend, protect, or approve of that thing or person.⁷

⁶ For accounts of motivating reasons see Schroeder (2007a, pp. 10-15) and Dancy (2000b).

⁷ Some of these acts are more than mental acts: praising, protecting, and promoting partially involve or consist in actions. However, these actions also involve positive attitudes. I use the phrase 'pro-attitude' to cover this list of acts and attitudes because the phrase 'pro-attitude' is used more routinely in the literature than 'pro-response'.

The concept of a normative reason for a pro-attitude is a familiar concept. We talk about normative reasons for pro-attitudes all the time. Thousands of people write blogs and newspaper and magazine articles numbering, listing, and explaining the reasons to admire scientists, singers, sportspeople, business leaders, civil disobedients, and actresses and actors. One article claims that there are 1,000 reasons to admire Roger Federer.⁸ Other articles argue that there are seven reasons to admire Dolly Parton and ten reasons to admire Amy Winehouse.⁹ There are articles discussing our reasons to admire Cristiano Ronaldo and Taylor Swift.¹⁰ And another article describes the five reasons we supposedly have to admire Comcast.¹¹ A quick Google search revealed hundreds of thousands of such articles.

We discuss and write about reasons to want and desire a diverse range of things. For instance, reasons to want to be more productive, reasons to want classic cars, reasons to want to be healthy, reasons to want a baby girl rather than a baby boy, reasons to want more immigration, reasons to want to keep ducks, the best reason to want a boyfriend, and Luther Vandross asks for the reason to want us back.¹² These reasons that we write about and ask for are reasons that warrant our wanting certain things: Vandross wants to know the reason why he should want us back, what warrants his wanting us back or counts in favour of wanting us back. And people write articles

⁸ See Jones (2012).

⁹ See Crowder (2015) and Burrunjor (2015).

¹⁰ See Inness (2014) and Fogarty (2015).

¹¹ See Marks (2014).

¹² See Vardy (2010), Malone (2015), Sheer Balance (2014), BuzzFeed (2014), Kirby (2014), Casey (2015), and Vandross's song, 'Give Me The Reason'.

about the reasons for other positive responses too such as whether we are giving employers reasons to hire us, the reasons to write a book, and the thirty-three reasons to visit New Zealand.¹³

In this book I will be mainly concerned with reasons for what I call *non-instrumental pro-attitudes*. Reasons for non-instrumental pro-attitudes are reasons for what we talk about as ‘for its own sake’ pro-attitudes such as reasons to desire something for its own sake or to admire someone for their own sake. I give a detailed account of the distinction between non-instrumental pro-attitudes (for-its-own-sake pro-attitudes) and instrumental pro-attitudes (not-for-its-own-sake pro-attitudes) in §6.2. The contrast between non-instrumental and instrumental pro-attitudes is easiest to see with desire. There are some things that we desire for their own sake and so desire non-instrumentally. Most of us desire happiness for its own sake. And many of us desire achievement, friendship, and love for their own sakes. There are other things that we do not desire for their own sake and only desire instrumentally. Many of us only desire money instrumentally; we only desire money because it enables us to get other things that we want for their own sake such as happiness and safety. And most of us only desire to get on a plane as a means to doing other things; most of us do not want to be on a flight for its own sake. We talk about doing other things, such as keeping promises, for its own sake. But it is not clear that there are attitudes other than desires that we talk about having both instrumentally and non-instrumentally. This is because it is not clear that we can have other attitudes, such as admiration, instrumentally; it is not clear that we can admire someone because they are a means to something else as we can desire something instrumentally as a means to something else that we want for its own sake.

The concept or property of being a normative reason for a pro-attitude may or may not be reducible to another normative notion. Some have argued that facts about reasons for pro-

¹³ See Poole (2015), Tucker (2015), and theplanetD (2015).

attitudes can be reduced to facts about the pro-attitudes that it would be fitting to have or facts about the pro-attitudes that we ought to have (see §11). The buck-passing account of value is compatible with all these accounts of what it is to be a normative reason for a pro-attitude.¹⁴ But the buck-passing account is also compatible with the view, held most prominently by T.M. Scanlon, Derek Parfit, Jonathan Dancy, and John Skorupski, that the concept or property of being a normative reason is an irreducible and fundamental concept or property. According to this view, we cannot provide a reductive analysis of normative reasons in terms of any other normative (or other) property.¹⁵

1.2. The Buck-Passing Account of Value

There are several different varieties of goodness. We are discussing *Goodness of a Kind* (sometimes known as attributive goodness) when we say that a particular knife is a good one, or that Nadal is a good tennis player. When we judge that a knife is a good one, good as a knife, we judge that it is good as a particular kind of thing, or for a particular purpose; we do not judge that the knife is good in all ways, in a different way than as a knife, good on the whole, or good all-things-considered. Similarly, when we say that Nadal is a good tennis player we are not saying that he is a good person. We might think that judgments of goodness of a kind are judgments that something is better than average (at least) on some scale, at performing some function, or for some purpose, and this scale, function, or purpose seems to be set by or closely related to the kind in question—such as tennis player or knife—or by a paradigm or exemplar of that kind.¹⁶

¹⁴ See McHugh and Way (2016, pp. 575-583).

¹⁵ See Scanlon (1998, pp. 17-18), Parfit (2011a, p. 31), Dancy (2004), and Skorupski (2007) (2010).

¹⁶ See Thomson (2008, pp. 19-23) and Ross (1930, pp. 66-67).

Prudential Goodness or goodness *for* a particular being or artefact is at issue when we judge that sun is *good for* plants, that the weather is *good for* ducks, and that regular exercise and five portions of fruit and vegetables a day is *good for* you, or *good for* ordinary human beings. When *A* is a living or conscious thing, *X*'s being good *for A* is tied to *X*'s benefitting *A* and *X*'s conducing to *A*'s flourishing or well-being. Being good *for* a particular object also seems to be an instance of this type of goodness: oil can be good *for* a lawnmower, for example. And *X*'s being good *for* an inanimate object is tied to *X*'s promoting that object's healthy functioning.

It seems to me, as it does to many others, that there is another type of goodness and value, goodness *simpliciter* and *non-elliptical* value.¹⁷ If something is good *simpliciter* or of *non-elliptical* value, then saying that it is good or of value is not elliptical for saying that it is good or of value *for* someone or something or good *as* something in particular. Things that are good *simpliciter* may always be good *for* someone, or good as a particular kind of thing, but they are also good in a way that exceeds their goodness *for* agents and their goodness as particular kinds of things in an important sense. Friendship and knowledge might be good *simpliciter*. The goodness of a friendship seems to (or at least may) outrun, or go beyond, the goodness of this friendship *for* each friend—and everyone else. Knowledge, at least non-trivial knowledge, seems to have a value beyond the way it affects agents; it seems to have a goodness or value in itself. Equality seems to be good *simpliciter* too. For instance, many hold that *Equal* (below) is in one respect better than *Unequal* (below) even though in *Unequal* no one is worse-off than anyone in *Equal*.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Pigden (1990), Sinnott-Armstrong (2003), Olson (2005, ch. 3), Arneson (2010, p. 731), Fletcher (2012b), and Rolwand (2016b).

¹⁸ See, for instance, Temkin (1986, p. 100).

<i>Equal</i>				
<i>Agent</i>	A	B	C	D
<i>Welfare</i>	100	100	100	100

<i>Unequal</i>				
<i>Agent</i>	A	B	C	D
<i>Welfare</i>	200	100	100	100

Others have argued that pleasure, beauty, liberty, democracy, the punishment of wrongdoers, and the Nazis' having lost the second world war are good *simpliciter* or of *non-elliptical* final value.¹⁹ (Even though, technically something could be finally prudentially valuable and finally attributively valuable, the phrase 'final value' seems to usually refer to non-elliptical final value. So, for the rest of this book, I'll use 'final value' to refer to 'non-elliptical final value').

Some have argued that there is no concept of goodness *simpliciter* or that nothing has the property of being good *simpliciter*. Elsewhere I have argued that we should reject such good *simpliciter* skepticism.²⁰ And some have suggested that if, as the buck-passing account holds, what it is for *X* to be good *simpliciter* is just for there to be reasons for everyone to have pro-attitudes towards *X*, then there are no longer any grounds for skepticism about goodness *simpliciter*. This is because skeptics about goodness *simpliciter* are not skeptics about reasons for pro-attitudes.²¹ But even if there is no concept of goodness *simpliciter* or no property of being good *simpliciter* there is a concept that *plays the role of being* that which ethicists and moral and political philosophers debate and discuss when they debate and discuss the value of equality, democracy, and liberty, and when

¹⁹ See Cohen (1995, p. 261), Dworkin (2001, pp. 185–190), Carter (1999, ch. 2), Helm (2009, §2.1), Nozick (1981, pp. 374–379), Moore (1903, ch. 3), and Olson (2005, pp. 34–35).

²⁰ See Rowland (2016b). Byrne (2016) shows that one argument for good *simpliciter* skepticism not explicitly discussed in Rowland (2016b) fails.

²¹ See McHugh and Way (2016, p. 578).

they debate and discuss whether pleasure is the only thing that is good in itself or whether other things, such as autonomy, matter too. That is, there is a concept that plays the role of—what we might think of as being—the central evaluative topic of ethics. If we should be skeptical about the idea that we have a concept of goodness *simpliciter* or that there is a property of being good *simpliciter*, then these discussions of goodness and value must be discussions about some kind of goodness *for* or goodness *of a kind* property. Skeptics about goodness *simpliciter* have somewhat plausible proposals as to which goodness *for* or goodness of a kind property plays this role of being the central evaluative topic of ethics.²² (A certain goodness *for* property might play this role; for instance, it might be that what is *good for everyone* plays this role of being the central evaluative topic of ethics).

The buck-passing account of value is primarily an account of goodness *simpliciter*.²³ But if you believe that there is nothing that is good *simpliciter* or of final value, then you should understand the buck-passing account as primarily an account of the variety of goodness and value that plays the role of being the central evaluative topic of ethics. I will refer to this variety of goodness and value as goodness *simpliciter* and final value. But the fact that I refer to this variety of goodness by this name does not matter for the project of this book; by goodness *simpliciter* understand me to have in mind *either* goodness *simpliciter* *or* whatever particular attributive or prudential value

²² See Finlay (2014, ch. 7) and Ridge (2014, esp. pp. 41-43).

²³ See Scanlon (2011) (1998, ch. 2-3, esp. pp. 97-99), Parfit (2011a, pp. 38-40), Ewing (1947, ch. 5), Orsi (2015, esp. ch. 1-3), Heathwood, (2008, pp. 47-51), Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004, p. 399 n. 29 and p. 391), and McHugh and Way (2016, pp. 577-578). John Skorupski is the exception here: Skorupski (2010, pp. 82-87) views the account as an account of prudential and attributive goodness and value.

property you think plays this goodness *simpliciter*-like role in our discussions about goodness and value.²⁴

Now, according to,

The Buck-Passing Account of Good Simpliciter (BPA). What it is for X to be non-instrumentally good *simpliciter* or of final value is just for X to have properties that provide reasons for us to have non-instrumental pro-attitudes in response to X (such as to desire or admire X for its own sake).

As I discuss in §5, the difference between X being good *simpliciter*, Y being good as a kind of thing, and Z being prudentially good *for* someone or something resides in the different sets of agents that have reasons to have pro-attitudes towards X , Y , and Z . This is reflected in the different buck-passing accounts of the different varieties of goodness. Whereas the buck-passing accounts of goodness as a kind of thing K and goodness *for* S that I articulate in §5 specify a particular set of agents related to K/S that have reasons to have pro-attitudes towards things that are good as K s or good *for* S , *BPA* simply holds that for X to be good *simpliciter* is for there to be reasons for *us* to have pro-attitudes in response to X . And reasons for ‘us’ should be understood as reasons for *everyone* or agent-neutral reasons, that is, reasons that everyone has that do not depend on what we

²⁴ My argument in §5 against alternative views of the relationship between reasons and value to the buck-passing account depends on there being a concept of goodness *simpliciter* or a property of being good *simpliciter*. But skeptics about goodness *simpliciter* can see the majority of §5 as engaged in the important task of articulating, motivating, and defending buck-passing accounts of all varieties of prudential and attributive goodness.

care about or any particular connection we bear to something.²⁵ So, most generally, according to the view that I defend in this book

What it is for X to be good or of value is just for there to be reasons for some (particular) set of agents to have pro-attitudes in response to X .

One further clarification about whom the reasons that feature in BPA are reasons for. It might seem that if an agent doesn't know about something, then there are no reasons for them to have pro-attitudes towards that thing. For instance, suppose that Mother Teresa's actions were good *simpliciter* but that I'm not aware of them—and nor could I easily become aware of them. Is there a reason for me to have pro-attitudes towards Mother Teresa's actions such as to be glad that she did what she did? If the answer is no, this problem can be easily ameliorated. For the reasons in BPA could be specified as reasons for us to have pro-attitudes in response to X so long as we are aware of or understand X and its reason-providing features.²⁶ (I won't add such a specification into BPA just for the sake of making this book easier to read but if you think that such a knowledge or understanding constraint on whom the reasons in BPA are reasons for is needed, take such a constraint to be implicit in BPA).

²⁵ See Stratton-Lake and Hooker (2006, p. 153). For a discussion of agent-neutral reasons see Ridge (2011).

²⁶ Cf. Broad (1930, p. 280) Chisholm (1981) (2005), Lemos (1994, pp. 3-19), Zimmerman (2001, pp. 15-32), and Bykvist (2009, pp. 3-4).

1.3. Motivations for the Buck-Passing Account

There are several positive reasons to accept *BPA*, which I discuss in detail in §4-5. First, *BPA* provides an informative account of what it is for something to be good *simpliciter*. Second, *BPA* explains the correlation that we find between goodness *simpliciter* and reasons for pro-attitudes. Namely, that if something is good *simpliciter*, there are reasons for us to have pro-attitudes towards it. As I discuss in §4.1, this correlation calls out for explanation and *BPA* explains it.

A third motivation for *BPA* concerns non-derivative reasons. Non-derivative reasons to ϕ are reasons to ϕ the normative force of which does not derive from the normative force of other reasons to ϕ . To get the idea of a non-derivative reason in mind consider two views about our reasons to keep promises. According to one view, there are (non-derivative) reasons for us to keep our promises even if no good would come of our keeping them. According to another view, the only reasons for us to keep our promises are (derivative) reasons that derive from the good consequences of our keeping our promises or our being disposed to keep our promises. Something's being good never seems to provide anyone with a non-derivative reason to have pro-attitudes towards that thing. For instance, suppose that I would have an enjoyable and relaxing time in St Ives and this is a reason for me to take a holiday there. And because I would have an enjoyable and relaxing time in St Ives, it would be good *simpliciter* if I went there for a holiday. The fact that it would be good if I went to St Ives is no reason for me to go to there that does not derive from the fact that it would be enjoyable and relaxing if I went there; that is, the fact that it would be good if I went to St Ives is no non-derivative reason for me to go there or have pro-attitudes towards going there. *BPA* explains why goodness never provides us with non-derivative reasons to have pro-attitudes. This is because according to *BPA*, something's being good is just its having the property of having other properties that provide us with reasons to have pro-attitudes towards it.

Fourth, as I explain in §4.5, similar theoretical debates arise regarding reasons and value and *BPA* explains why. Fifth, the more general buck-passing account of goodness that I articulated in the previous section explains what the different varieties of goodness (prudential goodness, attributive goodness, and goodness *simpliciter*) have in common; that is, why they are all types of goodness. And, as I explain in §5, we cannot explain this unless we accept the buck-passing account.

There are several other reasons to accept *BPA* that derive from problems with the only alternatives to it. *BPA* does not primarily compete with alternative accounts of good *simpliciter* because it is consistent with many other accounts of the concept or property of being good *simpliciter*. For instance, as I explained in §1.1, *BPA* is compatible with analysing normative reasons in terms of fittingness or ought. So, *BPA* is compatible with the view that for *X* to be good is for it to be fitting to have pro-attitudes towards *X*. Instead *BPA* primarily competes with alternative accounts of the relationship between reasons and value. There are only two views about the relationship between reasons and value that *BPA* is incompatible with, and so with which *BPA* competes.

First, the value-first account (*VFA*), which reduces facts about reasons to facts about value. Many have articulated and/or defended *VFA* including G.E. Moore, Joseph Raz, Michael Smith, Ralph Wedgwood, Ulrike Heuer, Barry Maguire, Jonas Olson, and Francesco Orsi.²⁷ There are several particular versions of *VFA* but one paradigmatic version of *VFA* holds that what it is

²⁷ See Moore (1903, pp. 24-26), Raz (2001, pp. 164-166), Smith (1994, chapter 5), Wedgwood (2009), Heuer (2004), Olson (2006), Orsi (2013a), Way (2013, pp. 35-47), Lord and Maguire (2016, pp. 16-17) and Maguire (2016).

for there to be reasons to desire and promote equality, freedom, and pleasure is just for equality, freedom, and pleasure to be of value.

Second, a pluralistic and non-reductionist view that holds that facts about reasons cannot be reduced to facts about value (*VFA* is false) but nor can facts about value be reduced to facts about reasons (*BPA* is false). We can call this view the no-priority view (*NPV*). For on this view neither reasons nor have priority over, or are more fundamental than, one another. According to *NPV*, the evaluative cannot be reduced to the normative and the normative cannot be reduced to the evaluative. If we hold *NPV*, we will hold that what it is for equality, freedom, and pleasure to be of value is not just for there to be reasons to desire and promote equality, freedom, and pleasure. But neither is it the case that what it is for there to be reasons to promote and desire equality, freedom, and pleasure is just for equality, freedom, and pleasure to be of value. *NPV* seems to be endorsed by Jonathan Dancy, and W.D. Ross.²⁸ *NPV* also seems to be a view that David Wiggins and John McDowell have held or have gestured towards.²⁹

In §4 I argue that if we accept *NPV*, we are committed to there being no explanation of the correlations and similarities between reasons and value such as the similar theoretical debates that have arisen about reasons and value and the striking correlation that we find between reasons and value, namely that if something is good, then there are reasons to have pro-attitudes towards it. If we accept *NPV*, we are also committed, I argue, to an unnecessarily ontologically profligate and qualitatively unparsimonious view. And this gives us further reason to reject *NPV*.

²⁸ See Dancy (2000a) and Ross (1939, pp. 278-279 and p. 283).

²⁹ See Wiggins (1987, pp. 195), McDowell (1998a, pp. 157-158), and Jacobson (2011, esp. §2.2).

In §2 and §3 I argue that we have good reasons to reject *VFA*. In §2 I argue that all versions of *VFA* are views that we have reason to reject because they are inconsistent with substantial widely held and plausible views in normative ethics. My argument in §3 concerns what I call *the unity of the normative*. According to *the unity of the normative*, reasons for belief and reasons for pro-attitudes are instances of the same relation with different relata; reasons for belief and reasons for pro-attitudes denote the same relation just warranting different things: beliefs in one case and pro-attitudes in the other.³⁰ In §3 I argue that *the unity of the normative* is very plausible and we should reject a view that entails its falsity. But I argue that *VFA* entails the falsity of *the unity of the normative*—whereas *BPA* does not.

As, I'll explain, these problems with *VFA* and *NPV* are extremely pertinent for whether we should accept *BPA*. One type of view that involves the negation of both *BPA* and *VFA* is not a view that I have in mind when I am discussing *NPV*. According to this view, another normative property *N*, such as fittingness or ought, is more fundamental than both reasons and value, what it is for *X* to be of value is for *X* to have some particular *N* property, and what it is for *X* to be a reason for a pro-attitude is for *X* to have some (other) particular *N* property. I do not discuss, or have in mind, views that reduce both reasons and value to another normative property when I discuss *NPV* because such views are very close in spirit to *BPA*; they are, we might say, normative-first views of the relationship between the normative and the evaluative. Indeed, other normative-first views are so closely aligned to *BPA* that *BPA* is sometimes called a fitting-attitude account of value and fitting-attitude accounts are sometimes called buck-passing accounts.³¹ And, so by *NPV* I mean the view that *VFA* does not hold, *BPA* does not hold, and no other normative-first

³⁰ See Stratton-Lake (2002, pp. xxv-xxvi) and Kearns and Star (2009, pp. 219-220).

³¹ See, for instance, Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004), Jacobson (2011, §2.1), and Way (2013, esp. pp. 27-31).

account of the relationship between the normative and the evaluative holds. In §11 I argue that we should accept *BPA* over alternative normative-first views. But it seems that either *VFA*, *NPV*, or a normative-first account of the relationship between reasons and value must hold; these three types of account exhaust logical space. In this case the fact that there are serious problems with both *NPV* and *VFA* is extremely pertinent for whether we should accept *BPA* or another normative-first account. For if there are serious problems with the only alternatives to *BPA*/normative-first accounts, we ought to accept *BPA* or another normative-first account.³²

1.4. Overview of the Book

The first part of this book, §2-5, is dedicated to making the case for *BPA* that I discussed in the previous section in more detail. In §2-3 I give arguments against *VFA*, in §4 I make several arguments for accepting *BPA* rather than *NPV*. And in §5 I give an argument for accepting *BPA* rather than *VFA* or *NPV*.

³² To clarify, *BPA* is consistent with fittingness-first accounts of reasons. For instance, we could combine a fittingness-first account of reasons and *BPA*. We would then say that for *X* to be of value is for there to be reasons for us to have non-instrumental pro-attitudes in response to *X*. And for there to be reasons for us to have non-instrumental pro-attitudes in response to *X* is for it to be fitting for us to have non-instrumental pro-attitudes in response to *X*. Such a view would be a buck-passing/fitting-attitude account of value. Proponents of fittingness-first views tend to want to claim that we should reject *BPA* because of the wrong kind of reason problem; see Chappell (2012), McHugh and Way (2016), and Howard (forthcoming). However, in §6 I argue that the wrong kind of reason problem does not show that we should reject *BPA* and in §11.4 I argue that proponents of the combination of a fittingness-first account of reasons and the fitting-attitude account of value are not in a better position regarding the wrong kind of reason problem than proponents of the combination of the reasons-first account and *BPA*.

In the second part of this book I argue that all of the objections that have been made to *BPA* can be overcome. There are broadly four types of objections to *BPA*. First, that it implies that there is value where there is none, or as I put it, that it produces *too much value*, because for some *Xs*, (i) there are reasons for us to have pro-attitudes towards *X*, and so *BPA* entails that *X* is of value, but (ii) *X* is not of value, and so *BPA* entails that something that is not of value is of value. If (i) and (ii) hold for some *Xs*, then *BPA* produces too much value. The much-discussed wrong kind of reason problem for *BPA* is the problem of revising *BPA* in a non-ad-hoc non-circular way so that it does not produce too much value (or showing that it does not need to be so revised in order to not produce too much value).³³ The following kind of case seems to be one in which *BPA* produces too much value. Suppose that an evil demon will punish us if we do not admire it for its own sake. It seems that there is reason for us to admire the demon for its own sake and so that *BPA* entails that the demon is good or of value. But the demon is not of value. So, *BPA* seems to entail the existence of value where there is none. In §6 I argue that *BPA* does not produce too much value in this kind of case because there are no reasons for us to admire the demon for its own sake even when it will punish us if we do not admire it for its own sake. And I argue that even if *BPA* did produce too much value in this kind of case *BPA* can be easily revised so as to not produce too much value.

The second type of objection to *BPA* is the opposite objection, namely that *BPA* produces *too little value*.³⁴ According to the too little value objection, for some *Xs*, (i) *X* is of value, so in order to be plausible *BPA* must entail that *X* is of value, but (ii) it is not the case that there are reasons for us to have pro-attitudes towards *X*, so *BPA* entails that *X* is not of value. For instance, consider the pleasure of a non-rational being, such as a bird, in a world without any rational beings. The

³³ See Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004).

³⁴ See Dancy (2000a, pp. 170-171), Bykvist (2009), and Reisner (2015).

pleasure of this bird is valuable. But there are no reasons for anyone to have pro-attitudes to the bird's pleasure. And so, it seems that according to *BPA*, such a bird's pleasure is not of value. In §7 I argue that *BPA* does not generate too little value in cases like this because there are reasons for agents in other worlds to have pro-attitudes towards such a bird's pleasure. And I argue that even if *BPA* did produce too little value in cases like this it can be easily revised to no longer have this implication.

The third type of objection to *BPA* concerns neutrality. Some have argued that *BPA* takes sides on too many debates in normative ethics, and so is not sufficiently neutral regarding substantial first-order normative matters.³⁵ In §8 I show that this is not the case. A fourth type of objection concerns other evaluative concepts and properties. Some have argued that *BPA* is implausible because if we accept it, then we should accept a buck-passing account of other evaluative concepts or properties such as good *for*, goodness of a kind, or thick evaluative concepts such as 'generous', 'kind', and 'cruel'.³⁶ In §5 and §9 I argue that *BPA* does not encounter problems because it must extend to these other evaluative concepts and properties.

In the final part of this book I move beyond motivating and defending *BPA* and extend *BPA* to provide an account of morality and all of practical normativity in terms of normative reasons. In §10 I show that similar arguments to those that motivate *BPA* can be used to motivate a buck-passing account of moral properties such as moral right and wrong. I defend a new buck-passing account of moral properties that analyses all moral properties in terms of non-role-dependent reasons for action and reasons to want to make amends. This account is distinctive,

³⁵ See Dancy (2000a, pp. 167-168), Olson (2007a) (2007b), Brunero (2010), and Heuer (2010, p. 180).

³⁶ See Heathwood (2008), Gregory (2013), Brännmark (2008, pp. 306-308), Kraut (2011, pp. 57-58), Crisp (2005, p. 82), and Väyrynen (2006, pp. 309-314).

new, and controversial. And this account is ambitious in that it tries to provide an account of morality and moral reasons in general, as well as an account of what distinguishes the moral domain from other normative domains. Furthermore, some have argued that we cannot give an account of what distinguishes the moral from the non-moral without doing first-order normative ethics.³⁷ In §10 I try to do exactly that which has been claimed to be impossible: I try to give a formal account of the moral without doing first-order normative ethics. I show that there are strong reasons to accept my buck-passing account of morality, that this buck-passing account of morality does not encounter insuperable objections, and that there are strong reasons to reject the only alternative views to a buck-passing account of morality.

In §11 I extend the buck-passing account to provide an account of oughts and fittingness in terms of normative reasons and, building on the arguments in §2-10, I show that we should accept a reasons-first account of practical normativity, according to which, ethics, morality, and the normativity of all that is practically normative consists in facts about reasons that cannot be reduced to facts about other normative or evaluative properties. In making this argument in §11 I give one of the first arguments for the prominently endorsed but relatively un-argued for reasons-first account of practical normativity.³⁸ I show that the reasons-first account provides an attractive, explanatorily fruitful, and compelling map of the nature and interaction of normative, evaluative, moral, and deontic properties and an explanation of the nature of the normativity of the evaluative,

³⁷ See, for instance, Dorsey (2016).

³⁸ See Scanlon (2014, p. 2), Skorupski (2010), and Schroeder (2007a, p. 81). Skorupski (2010) does give arguments for the reasons-first view. However, in Rowland (2011) I argue that Skorupski's arguments do not succeed.

the moral, and the deontic.³⁹ And, as I discuss in §11.5, the fact that we can extend *BPA* to provide such an account of practical normativity provides us with further reasons to accept *BPA*.

1.5. Clarifying the Buck-Passing Account

In the rest of this introductory chapter I'll clarify how various distinctions in value are made if we accept *BPA*. And I'll discuss the controversial issue of whether *BPA* is a conceptual or metaphysical thesis.

1.5.2. Distinctions in Value

BPA distinguishes between instrumental and non-instrumental goodness and final and non-final value. That which is non-instrumentally good or of final value is good or of value for its own sake. For instance, money is only instrumentally good. Money is only good as a means to things that are non-instrumentally good such as enjoyable experiences, knowledge, achievement, and health. *BPA* analyses the instrumental goodness and value of things such as money in the following way:

Instrumental Value. What it is for *Y* to be instrumentally good *simpliciter* or instrumental to something of final value is just for *Y* to be a means to something, *X*, that there are reasons for us to have non-instrumental pro-attitudes towards.

So, according to *BPA*, for happiness to be of final value is just for there to be reasons for us to desire it for its own sake. And money's being of instrumental value consists in money being a means to something, such as happiness, that we have reasons to desire for its own sake. And similarly, for friendship to be of only instrumental, and not final, value is just for friendship to be

³⁹ I follow Dancy (2004, p. 34) in referring to facts about what we ought to do as deontic facts.

a means to something that we have reasons to desire for its own sake, such as happiness, but for friendship not to be something that we have reason to desire for its own sake.

It might seem that instrumental goodness *simpliciter* is an oxymoron because to be good *simpliciter* is to be good without qualification. However, the phrase goodness *simpliciter* is a term of art designed to contrast the goodness that certain things have with attributive and prudential goodness. To be instrumentally good *simpliciter* is to be a means to something that is good *simpliciter* rather than attributively or prudentially good. ‘Instrumentally good *simpliciter*’ is just shorthand for ‘a means to something that is non-instrumentally good *simpliciter*’.

In addition to the distinction between instrumental and final goodness and value there is, in the literature on value, a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value. We can aptly preserve this distinction if we hold *BPA*, for we can add to *BPA* that

Intrinsic Final Value. What it is for *X* to be of intrinsic final value is just for *X* to have *intrinsic* properties that provide reasons for us to have non-instrumental pro-attitudes in response to it.

Extrinsic Final Value. What it is for *X* to be of extrinsic final value is just for *X* to have *extrinsic* properties that provide reasons for us to have non-instrumental pro-attitudes in response to it.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Intrinsic Final Value* and *Extrinsic Final Value* fit with Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen’s (2000, pp. 36-37) distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value in terms of good-making features or properties; see also Zimmerman (2010, §3).

This distinction fits with common examples of intrinsic and extrinsic value. According to *BPA*'s distinction, a state of affairs in which someone is in conscious pleasure will be of intrinsic final value because an intrinsic feature of this state of affairs, namely the conscious pleasure, provides reasons for everyone to have pro-attitudes in response to it. And one of Princess Diana's dresses is of extrinsic final value—supposing that it is—because the reasons for us to have positive responses to it are provided by extrinsic properties of the dress, namely the property it has of being a dress that Diana wore.⁴¹ (To clarify, however, although *BPA* can distinguish intrinsic and extrinsic final value in the way that I've been discussing, it does not follow from *BPA* that there are instances of extrinsic final value).

There are different degrees of goodness and value. And these different degrees of *X*'s goodness and value correspond to the strength of the reasons that there are to respond to *X*. To see this, however, we need to introduce some distinctions in normative reasons. The notion of a normative reason to ϕ that *BPA* analyses value in terms of is a *pro tanto* or contributory notion rather than an overall or all-things considered notion. The fact that there are *pro tanto* reasons to ϕ does not establish that overall one should ϕ . There might be reasons to take one option even though what one should do, and what there is most reason to do, is to take another option. Suppose that I've promised that I'll go to visit my mother this weekend but that there's a great party that I'd much rather go to and that it would be a lot of fun to go to. In this case there is *some* reason for me to stay and go to the party, and thereby break my promise, even though there is most reason (suppose) for me to keep my promise and go to visit my mother.⁴²

To be a little more specific,

⁴¹ The example of Diana's dress derives from Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2000, p. 41).

⁴² On the contributory and the overall see Dancy (2004, pp. 15-25).

Pro Tanto Reason. There is *pro tanto* reason for A to ϕ so long as there is some reason for A to ϕ .

There can be a *pro tanto reason* for A to ϕ even if there is more reason for A to not- ϕ rather than to ϕ , and even if it is not the case that A should ϕ . But

Sufficient Reason. There is sufficient reason for A to ϕ so long as there is not more reason for A to not- ϕ than to ϕ .

There is sufficient reason for A to ϕ so long as it is not the case that A should not ϕ even if it is not the case that A should uniquely ϕ . There is sufficient reason for A to ϕ even if there is something other than ϕ -ing that A has just as much reason to do as ϕ -ing. That is, even if A ought to (ϕ or perform some act other than ϕ -ing). And

Most Reason. There is (uniquely) most (or decisive) reason for A to ϕ so long as there is more reason for A to ϕ than perform any competing act other than ϕ -ing.

There is most reason for A to ϕ so long as ϕ -ing is the only thing that A ought to do.⁴³

Now, corresponding to the notions of *pro tanto*, sufficient, and most reason are notions of being good or of value to some extent, of being good or of value overall, and of being (uniquely) best. A government's education policy could be good to an extent because it would get children

⁴³ See Parfit (2011a, pp. 32-37).

to be more productive without being a good education policy overall because it involves children being taught material that they should not be taught and failing to be taught material that they should be taught. And something could be good overall without being uniquely best. For instance, consider two worlds. In the first world there is a great amount of happiness but not quite so much achievement. In the second world there is a great amount of achievement but not quite so much happiness. It might be that neither of these worlds is better than the other and so that neither is uniquely best but that both are good overall. A necessary addition to *BPA* is the following set of distinctions between different degrees of value:

Good To Some Extent. What it is for *X* to be *to some extent* non-instrumentally good *simpliciter* is just for there to be a *pro tanto* reason for us to have a non-instrumental pro-attitude in response to *X*.

Good Overall. What it is for *X* to be non-instrumentally good *simpliciter overall* is just for there to be *sufficient* reason for us to have a non-instrumental pro-attitude towards *X*.

(Uniquely) Best. What it is for *X* to be (uniquely) non-instrumentally *best simpliciter* is just for there to be *most* reason for us to have a non-instrumental pro-attitude towards *X*.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ It might be wondered whether *BPA* takes a stand on whether ‘good’ is prior to ‘better’ or *vice versa*. It might seem that *BPA* entails that neither ‘good’ nor ‘better’ are prior to one another. For both are analysed in terms of reasons for pro-attitudes according to *BPA*. This may well be a welcome conclusion for in several articles Johan Gustafsson (2014) (2016) has plausibly argued that neither ‘good’ nor ‘better’ should be analysed in terms of one another. However, it may be possible to supplement *BPA* with further arguments that entail that ‘good’ can be analysed in terms of ‘better’ or *vice versa*. For instance, if *BPA* were combined with the view that all reasons for pro-attitudes can be analysed in terms of reasons for preferences, then it might seem that *BPA* would analyse goodness in terms of betterness, or would be

In addition to the different varieties of, degrees of, and distinctions in value that I have so far discussed, we sometimes refer to what we might call different *genres* of value such as aesthetic, economic, epistemic, and sentimental value. If we accept *BPA*, we can just understand *Xs* being, for instance, of epistemic value as *Xs* just being of final value and being related to epistemic concerns—an account of what it is to be of epistemic concern is beyond the scope of the buck-passing account and this book. (This approach to how we should understand different genres of value is complicated slightly by the fact that certain genres of value are not genres of final value. For instance, economic value seems to be a type of value-as-a-kind of thing: it seems that to be of economic value is to be of value as an economic commodity in the same way that to be good as a knife is to be good as a specific kind of thing, namely a knife).

As I discuss in §9, *BPA* may not extend to provide an account of *thick* evaluative properties such as kindness, cruelty, and generosity. Other somewhat thick evaluative properties should, however, be analysed in terms of reasons. For instance, if we accept buck-passing accounts of goodness and value, then we should hold that for *A* to be admirable is just for there to be reasons to admire *A* for its own sake and for *X* to be desirable is just for there to be reasons to desire *X*.⁴⁵

I've discussed how *BPA* understands different varieties of, degrees of, distinctions in, and genres of value in terms of normative reasons. But if it is plausible to hold buck-passing accounts

equivalent to such an analysis. For if all reasons for pro-attitudes were reasons for preferences, then *BPA* would analyse all monadic value claims/properties in terms of comparative evaluative properties. Most generally, I do not believe that *BPA* closes off the option that 'good' can be defined in terms of 'better' or *vice versa*.

⁴⁵ Cf. Smith (2016), Skorupski (1996, p. 205), Tappolet (2004) (2013), Schueler (1995, p. 84), Suikkanen (2014a, pp. 86-89), and Väyrynen (2013a, p. 37).

of goodness and value, we should be able to plausibly adopt buck-passing accounts of badness and dis-value. It seems to me that badness and dis-value should be analysed in a way that is the mirror image of the way that goodness and value are analysed according to *BPA*: it seems to me that what it is for X to be bad *simpliciter* is just for there to be reasons for us to have con-attitudes in response to X . Where con-attitudes include disapproval, holding in contempt, being averse to, condemning, criticising, and/or desiring that something not be brought about. For instance, for pain and torture to be bad *simpliciter* is just for there to be reasons for us to be averse to instances of pain and torture and to desire that instances of pain and torture are not brought about.

1.5.2. *BPA: Metaphysical or Conceptual?*

BPA is an account of the property that we're talking about something having when we talk about something being good or valuable. There are many different conflicting first-order theories of what things are of final value. For instance, hedonists hold that only pleasure is of final value and pluralists hold that a plurality of different things, such as friendship, beauty, achievement, autonomy, and virtue, are finally valuable. *BPA* is an account of that which hedonists and pluralists are disagreeing about when they disagree about what things are of final value. And *BPA* is an account of one of the things that non-naturalists, reductive naturalists, and non-cognitivists disagree about the metaphysical status of. Accordingly, *BPA* is not, or at any rate is not intended to be, in competition with substantive first-order views of which things are of final value or with views about the metaphysical status of facts about or judgments about goodness or value. (I explain how *BPA* is consistent with various metaethical views in detail in a footnote).⁴⁶ Instead *BPA* is

⁴⁶ *BPA* does not entail any particular metaethical view about the general nature of moral properties, moral language, moral concepts, or moral judgments. *BPA* is consistent with the view that what it is for R to be a normative reason to ϕ is just for R to have a certain natural property. And *BPA* is consistent with the view that what it is for R to be a normative reason to ϕ is for R to have an irreducibly normative non-

natural property. But if what it is for R to be a normative reason to ϕ is just for R to have a certain natural property and BPA holds, then what it is for X to be good *simpliciter* is just for X to have properties that provide reasons for us to have pro-attitudes in response to X . And there is more to be said about what it is for R to be a reason for a pro-attitude, namely we can say more about the natural property (or properties) that the property of being a reason for a pro-attitude consists in. (As I discuss in §8.3, BPA is also consistent with the view, which many reductive naturalists hold, that all normative reasons for action are hypothetical and all reasons to desire X are provided by the benefits of having X).

BPA is compatible with the moral error theory. BPA merely holds that we should understand the property of being of final value in terms of normative reasons if there is such a property as being of final value.

BPA is consistent with expressivist views according to which moral and normative judgments consist in desire-like states rather than belief-like states. Prominent expressivist Allan Gibbard (1990) accepts that judgments about the goodness of X are just judgments about the reasons for having certain pro-attitudes towards X . Gibbard just thinks that we are best off understanding these judgments as consisting in desire-like mental states rather than belief-like mental states. Furthermore, many expressivists are now quasi-realists who hold that even though our moral judgments consist in desire-like states we can still hold that there are moral facts, truths, properties, beliefs, and knowledge. BPA is consistent with this expressivist quasi-realism according to which there are facts about, and properties of being of, value; see Blackburn (1999) and Orsi (2015, pp. 17-18).

BPA also seems to be consistent with relativist metaethical views, although it might need revising a little for relativists. Relativists hold that nothing is merely right, wrong, good, or bad. Rather, according to relativists, actions and other things are only right, wrong, good, and bad relative to various standards; that is, there is nothing that is good *simpliciter* but only things that are good-relative-to-standard- S . If we endorse such a relativist view we can still hold BPA —although, as I discussed in §1.2, ‘goodness *simpliciter*’ in BPA should not be understood as literally denoting goodness *simpliciter* if relativism holds but rather as denoting whatever standard-relative goodness property plays the goodness *simpliciter* role. Such a relativistic

- (a) An account of the properties of being non-instrumentally good *simpliciter* and being of final value; and/or
- (b) An account of the concepts of non-instrumental goodness *simpliciter* and final value.

BPA certainly provides (a), I will understand *BPA* to be primarily (a), and according to one plausible view philosophical analyses just are property reductions.⁴⁷ I don't want to be too declarative about whether *BPA* also provides (b). All of the arguments in this book, as I take care to show, go through regardless of whether *BPA* is (a) and/or (b). But I am attracted to the view that *BPA* can provide a plausible *unobvious* conceptual analysis of goodness *simpliciter* and final value as well as a plausible account of the property of being of final value.

There are two salient worries about the idea that *BPA* can provide a plausible unobvious conceptual analysis of the concept *final value* that I will address. First, it might seem that if we accept *BPA* and *BPA* is a conceptual analysis, then we must accept that those who reject *BPA* are conceptually confused. And this is implausible. However, it is not apt to claim that someone is conceptually confused if they reject a conceptual analysis that is only revealed as correct to us after we have a deep understanding of a series of complicated arguments. Rather someone who rejects a conceptual analysis that we only see to be correct if we understand the complicated arguments that reveal its truth is merely not aware of these complex arguments that reveal the analysis's truth: someone who rejects such an analysis is not conceptually confused but rather has just not realised that there are sound arguments that show the analysis's truth. Of course, denying a conceptual

version of *BPA* will hold that what it is for *X* to be of value-relative-to-certain-standards is just for there to be reasons-relative-to-certain-standards for everyone to have pro-attitudes in response to *X*.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, King (1998).

truth involves a mistake about a concept but we might understand a lot about a concept and still make a mistake about it. A conceptual error doesn't involve wholesale error or misunderstanding and nor does it involve a lack of a sophisticated understanding of a concept but merely a failing to grasp some truth about a concept.

A second worry about the idea that *BPA* provides an unobvious conceptual analysis of goodness and value is that if this were the case, then we must become acquainted with reasons for pro-attitudes before we become acquainted with goodness and value. But we become acquainted with goodness and value before we become acquainted with reasons for pro-attitudes. So, *BPA* does not provide a plausible conceptual analysis of goodness and value.

But it is not obvious that *BPA* holds as a conceptual truth only if we become acquainted with reasons before we become acquainted with goodness and value. For instance, Michael Smith claims that *X* can provide a good conceptual analysis of *Y* so long as *X* best explains our inferential judgments about *Y* and the other ways in which we use *Y*.⁴⁸ If this is all it takes for a conceptual analysis of *Y* in terms of *X* to be a good one, then the grasp of *X* need not be *temporally* prior to the grasp of *Y* in order for *X* to provide a good conceptual analysis of *Y*. And it seems that *BPA* can be a good conceptual analysis of value for the reasons that Smith believes that analyses that are good conceptual analyses are good ones. For if my argument in this book is correct, *BPA* best explains our inferential judgments about value, the other ways that we use our concepts of goodness and value, and the way that we use our concept of value *vis-à-vis* our concept of a reason and *vice versa*. And this is why, as I see it, *BPA* is a very plausible, and explanatorily powerful,

⁴⁸ See Smith (1997, p. 103).

unobvious conceptual analysis of value. So, *BPA* is an account of the property of being good *simpliciter* and perhaps also the concept of being good *simpliciter*.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ If, as I've been suggesting, *BPA* is primarily an account of the property of being of value, then *BPA* reduces the property that *X* has of being good *simpliciter* to the property *X* has of having other properties that provide reasons for everyone to have pro-attitudes in response to *X*. Some people worry about what property reductions such as this really are; that is, some worry about what it means to reduce one property to another. I believe that that we should follow Mark Schroeder and hold that these property reductions give asymmetric accounts of the structure of properties. So, *BPA* holds that the structure of the property of being of value consists in having features that give everyone reasons to have pro-attitudes. We can illustrate this view of what property reductions are with some examples. Consider a reduction of the property of being triangular to the property of having three sides. According to this view of property reductions, such a reduction holds (i) that the property of being triangular has the structure of having three-sides and consists in nothing more than this, (ii) all triangles have in common three-sidedness and nothing more, and (iii) three-sidedness is more fundamental than triangularity. Similarly, consider a reduction of shaded squareness to the properties of being shaded and being a square. According to this view of property reductions, such a reduction holds that (i) the property of being a shaded square has the structure of being shaded and being a square, (ii) all shaded squares have in common the properties of being shaded and being a square (and nothing more), and (iii) shadedness and squareness are more fundamental than shaded squareness; see Schroeder (2007a, ch. 4, esp. pp. 67-72).