




Reconciling the Deprivation Account with the Final Badness of Death

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1 Introduction¹

The question whether death can be bad for those that die has regained interest in contemporary analytic philosophy. Despite serious challenges, many philosophers believe that death can be bad for those that die and thus strive to explain how this can be. The most popular view to emerge from the literature is the *deprivation account*, on which death can be bad for those that die if and because death deprives them of intrinsically good things that they would otherwise have.² Defenders of the approach maintain that, among other things, the deprivation account has the benefit of solving *the problem of the missing subject*, which is a problem originally described by Epicurus (1940) of explaining how death can be bad for anyone given that it is never experienced either by the living or the dead.

Though attractive, the deprivation account may seem to entail that death can only be instrumentally bad, meaning that it can only be bad *for the sake of its effects* (cf., Bradley 2009: 47). While facts about death being preventative of intrinsically good things are crucial to its value, there is the intuition that death can nevertheless be finally bad, meaning that it can be bad *for its own sake*. In this paper, we argue that

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² Defenders of some version of the deprivation account include Nagel (1970), Sumner (1976), Brueckner and Fischer (1986), Feldman (1991; 1992) McMahan (1988, 2002), Luper (2009), Bradley (2009), and Kagan (2012). For the sake of simplicity, we shall mainly draw on the views of Feldman and Bradley here.

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this intuition is compatible with the deprivation account by suggesting that death can be bad for its own sake if and because it deprives those that die of intrinsically good things that they would otherwise have. While death can only be extrinsically bad, then, this does not mean that death would just be instrumentally bad and hence that it would be fitting to disfavor death merely as a means toward an end. Put differently, death should be added to the long list of objects that can have extrinsic but final value.³

Christine Korsgaard (1983) was among the first philosophers to put explicit emphasis on the possibility that things can have extrinsic but final value. Since her early discussions, many examples have been offered in the literature involving things that are *good* for their own sakes but in virtue of their extrinsic features. Our favorite examples tend to invoke the extrinsic properties of being rare and unique, which may at the very least contribute to making some objects worthy of being treated as ends (Kagan 1998: 282f; O'Neill 1992: 124). For example, consider an artwork whose aesthetic qualities are complimented by its rarity and uniqueness to make it good for its own sake. What makes death special relative to most other examples of this sort is that it represents not a case of positive value but of something that is *bad* for its own sake in virtue of its extrinsic feature of depriving us of intrinsic value.

In section 2, we outline some of the main features of the deprivation account and provide some context for its development. The aim is to clarify what it means for death to be bad if and because it deprives us of intrinsically good things. In section 3, we move into the field of analytic axiology and look at some of the most salient distinctions that need to be made regarding value. In section 4, we hope to clarify what we mean by suggesting that death has extrinsic but final value. Toward the end of the paper, we consider some remaining problems standing in the way of our suggestion. One objection states that our view makes the notion of final value confusing, not only because it allows things to be good for their own sakes in virtue of their uses and effects, but because it might allow final value to be a kind of *derivative value* in the sense that it depends on facts about other values.

2 The Deprivation of Death

When philosophers speak of the value of death, they often have in mind either the value of the event of death, the state of said event occurring, or the state of the event having occurred and a person no longer existing. We consider the deprivation account to be an attractive account of the value of all of these varieties of death, but, for the sake of simplicity, we shall focus our attention on the state of death having occurred and a person no longer existing. The deprivation account states that if a person dies at a certain time and is thereby deprived of intrinsically good things,

³ As this paragraph hopefully makes clear, we shall use expressions like 'has final value', 'has value as an end', and 'has value for its own sake' interchangeably. We assume that they intend to pick out the same type of value. Similarly, we shall use expressions like 'has instrumental value', 'has value as a means', and 'has value for the sake of its effects' interchangeably too. We shall return to these labels and their exact relations in section 3, where we clarify that whether an object has final value is a different matter than whether it has intrinsic or extrinsic value.

then death at that time is extrinsically and *pro-tanto* bad for that person.⁴ If a person dies at a certain time and is thereby deprived of more intrinsically good things than intrinsically bad things, then death at that time is extrinsically and *overall* bad for that person.⁵ The deprivation account is not meant to explain why death is always bad for those that die, but is meant to explain how it *can* be bad in this way (Feldman 1991: 217, 1992: 140; Bradley 2009: 50). Death is not extrinsically and overall bad for those that die and who are thereby deprived of more intrinsically bad things than intrinsically good things. The following is a more succinct formulation of the view:

The Deprivation Account: The death of *P* at *t* is bad for *P* if and because it deprives *P* of the good things that *P* would have experienced had *P* not died at *t*.

Feldman (1992: 7) and Bradley (2009: xiv and 50) are among those to defend the deprivation account and are also the ones we shall be drawing on in the following discussion. Because their version of the deprivation account focuses on the intrinsic value that an individual *would* have access to had they *not* died at a given time, it becomes a surprisingly sophisticated account invoking complex comparative facts. Whether death constitutes a deprivation for a person that dies at a given time is determined by comparing his world to the nearest possible one in which he does not die at that time (Feldman 1991: 213f; Bradley 2009: 50). One problem with this is that it is difficult to determine what possible worlds are relevant to these types of comparison since there are many ways for something (like the death of a person) not to occur at a given time. The worry is that without more detailed instructions on how to pick out the relevant possible worlds, there is a risk of indeterminacy that would result in there being no fact of the matter about whether death ever constitutes a deprivation.⁶

We shall set aside the indeterminacy problem for now and assume that there is some account available that makes determinate comparisons between possible worlds feasible. The reason we wish to highlight the comparative nature of the deprivation account is to point out something crucial about what the badness of death is meant to involve. The overall value of death for a person that dies at a given time is calculated by subtracting the intrinsic value in that person's life in the closest possible world in which he does not die at that time from the intrinsic value in that person's actual life, assuming that they actually *do* die at that time.⁷ This does not mean that when we judge that death at that time is bad for the person who dies, the *object* of our evaluation is some comparative fact involving relations between possible

⁴ For more on the ambiguity, see, e.g., Rosenbaum (1986, 120f). We do not think that the ambiguity affects the views we are about to defend but will reconsider a related issue in section 4. See in particular footnote 30.

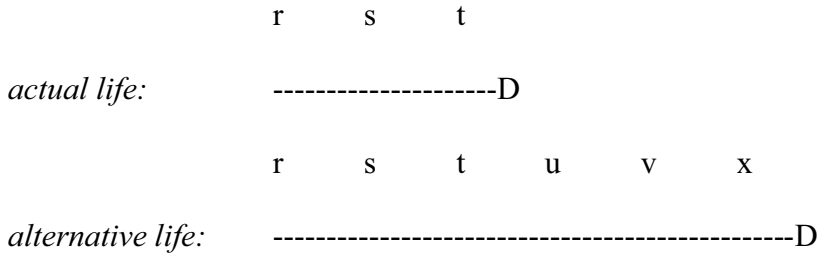
⁵ If there are other contributors to the badness of death than the deprivation it involves, then we would have to include a *ceteris paribus* clause within this conditional.

⁶ For an objection along these lines see McMahan (1988, 2002). Feldman (1991, 224ff.) and Bradley (2009, chapter 2.2) themselves have also commented on the issue.

⁷ Otherwise, we can look at a possible world where he does die and treat that world as if it were the actual one, which would give us an idea of how bad it would be *if* a person died at a certain time. See Feldman (1991, 216 and 1992: 150) and Bradley (2009: 50).

worlds. Indeed, for us to judge that death is extrinsically bad for the person that dies, we must judge that death *as such* is bad in virtue of such a comparative fact:

Illustration 1. Comparing lives.



These lines represent two lives cut short by the event of death (marked by “D”) but at different times. Both lives contain the intrinsic goods r, s, and t, but the latter contains additional intrinsic goods not contained by the former, namely u, v, and x. This comparative fact makes death *as such* bad for the person whose actual life is here represented. Now, because the state of being dead is made bad by a comparative fact involving relations between possible worlds, it can be unclear exactly *when* death is meant to be bad for the person that dies. Nagel (1970) and Silverstein (1980) suggest that death is not bad for anyone at *any* determinate time. They point out that just because we cannot identify a determinate point at which death makes a person worse off, this does not mean that death cannot be bad for that person.

Contemporary discussions about the value of death began as reactions to the problem of the missing subject. Originating in the writings of Epicurus (1940: 31), the basic idea behind the problem is that death cannot be bad for anyone because the state of being dead cannot be experienced either by the living or the dead. Most attempts to account for the value of death, including the deprivation account, are meant to overcome this problem. It should therefore be noted that there are at least two distinct variations of the problem, invoking different conditions on what might count as bad for a given person:

The experience argument: Something can be bad for a person *P* only if it could (at least in principle) be experienced by *P*. Because death marks the end of experience, death as such cannot be bad for the person that dies.⁸

The existence argument: Something can be bad for a person *P* only if the person exists when the badness exists or occurs. Because death marks the end of existence, death as such cannot be bad for the person that dies.⁹

The experience condition entails the existence condition since something can only be experienced while it exists, but the reverse is not true since, arguably, something

⁸ This interpretation is discussed by Feldman (1992: 127ff.) and Fischer (2014). It has been defended by Rosenbaum (1986: 121f.).

⁹ This interpretation has been discussed by Silverstein (1980) and McMahan (1988). It has been defended by Nussbaum (2013) (although she does not hold an Epicurean position).

could exist within the boundaries of a life without being a possible object of experience. Epicurus can be interpreted as adopting the first condition because he accepted a form of hedonism on which the only things that are intrinsically good are experiences of pleasure and the only things that are intrinsically bad are experiences of pain.¹⁰ Because death itself is not an experience and because a person cannot experience their own death with either pleasure or pain, it is tempting to conclude that death cannot be bad for those that die.¹¹ Epicurus seems to have recognized the possibility that death could have extrinsic value but rejects the suggestion on the basis that death as such does not provide things that are intrinsically valuable for people either.¹²

The most obvious way of responding to the problem of the missing subject is to reject the experience condition and the existence condition. For example, suppose we deny hedonism and its notion that the only things that have intrinsic value are experiences of pleasure and pain. We may instead be tempted to adopt a form of *preferentialism*, on which the only things that have intrinsic value are the satisfaction and frustration of our preferences (Luper 2021: sec. 3.1). While something needs to be experienced in order to be pleasurable or painful, we may be completely unaware of the satisfaction and frustration of some of our preferences. In fact, we may go so far as to ascribe intrinsic value to the satisfaction and frustration of preferences that could not be experienced even in principle, which would entail a rejection of the experience condition. Preferentialism entails a rejection of the existence condition too, for while something needs to occur within the boundaries of a life to be pleasurable or painful, the satisfaction and frustration of our preferences can take place long after we have stopped existing.

The deprivation account takes on a different approach to the problem of the missing subject. Feldman (1991: 207ff.; 1992: 146ff.) and Bradley (2009: ch. 1) assume for the sake of argument that hedonism is correct, and that Epicurus was right to emphasize the role of existence and experience.¹³ However, they also take on a more nuanced view than Epicurus by suggesting that only *certain kinds* of values depend on their bearers being accessible and occurring within the boundaries of life. Feldman and Bradley suggest that while an object can have intrinsic value for a person only if the object is a possible object of their experience, the same requirement does not hold for *extrinsic value*. An object has extrinsic value if and because its value depends on the capability of the object to affect the balance of intrinsic value that occurs within the boundaries of life, but the object to which the extrinsic value accrues need not itself occur within those boundaries. Feldman and Bradley maintain that death has extrinsic

¹⁰ Note that the two ideas are independent from one another, meaning that a person could claim that while only the possible objects of experience have value for people, these include more things than just pleasure and pain.

¹¹ The claim that death ends existence is called the *termination thesis* and is assumed by Feldman (1991: 212; 1992: 148) and Bradley (2009: xvi) for the sake of argument.

¹² For details regarding this issue, see Luper (2021: sec. 3.1).

¹³ Bradley also offers a defense of this simple kind of hedonism, while Feldman mainly adopts it for strategic reasons—although he does defend a certain kind of hedonism in his later work (Feldman 2004).

value in this sense and so whether death can be bad for those that die does not depend on the kinds of considerations that we have just been discussing.¹⁴

We are not entirely convinced that the problem of the missing subject is such a worrying challenge to begin with, mostly because of our doubts about the conditions that it invokes and the hedonism that inspires them. Nevertheless, we are still attracted to the view that one of the main contributors to the badness of death for those that die *is* the deprivation of intrinsic goods that it might involve.¹⁵ If death at a certain time results in a person's life containing less intrinsic goods than it would contain if death had occurred at some other time, then death is at least to that extent bad for the person that dies.¹⁶ However, while this seems to us to get things right, we shall argue that the deprivation account leaves important questions unanswered about the precise type of value that might accrue to death. Feldman and Bradley suggest that death can be extrinsically bad for those that die, but, as we are about to explain, this need not entail that death could only be bad in an instrumental way, meaning that death could only be bad for the sake of its effects.

3 Distinguishing Final and Intrinsic Value

Having just outlined the main features of the deprivation account, we wish to consider its implications for the value of death more closely. Feldman and Bradley rely on a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value that is notoriously difficult to cash out in detail, but there are earmarks and examples that can be used to get an intuitive grasp.¹⁷ Intrinsic value accrues to objects in virtue of their *intrinsic properties*, which are the properties possessed by objects irrespective of the contexts in which the objects occur.¹⁸ Extrinsic value accrues to objects in virtue of their

¹⁴ There is some unclarity as a result of Bradley and Feldman not always using the same labels for the distinction and Feldman himself changing his terminology between contexts (e.g., Feldman 1991: 212f; 1992, 148ff.; Bradley 2009: 3f, 47ff.). Nevertheless, Feldman (1991) is explicit in his early work that death is “extrinsically” bad for people that die because of what it prevents or otherwise leads to. Bradley similarly states that some things are good for us merely because “they lead to other things that are good for us, or prevent things that are bad for us. These things are merely extrinsically good for us—more specifically, they are *instrumentally* good for us. They are good as a means” (2009: 3). He adds that death is bad for those that die “in virtue of what it takes away from us” and that to understand the value of death, “we must understand instrumental value” (ibid: 47). We shall later explain that Bradley runs together extrinsic and instrumental value in a way that risks being misleading.

¹⁵ Cf., Williams (1973), Benatar (2017: ch. 5), Kamm (1993, 2019, 2021), and Burri (2019) for the idea that death can also be intrinsically bad irrespective of the deprivation that it involves. The idea is that if death is bad for the person that dies, then it is because death has the intrinsic property of meaning the end of someone's life, consciousness, or personhood. Nagel (1970) briefly considers this view as well.

¹⁶ Note that this line of reasoning entails that things can also make a person intrinsically worse off even though they occur before the person is born. Feldman (1991: 218f.; 1992: 152) illustrates this with the loss of a father's job—something that can happen long before one's birth but can still involve a deprivation of intrinsic goods.

¹⁷ For a recent overview of some of the distinctions discussed here, see Rønnow-Rasmussen (2015).

¹⁸ Moore (1993/1903: 142–147) therefore suggested that we can determine that an object has intrinsic value by imagining it in isolation. For more on this kind of isolation test and its problems, see, e.g., Broad (1961), Chisholm (1978, 1981), Bodanszky & Conee (1981), and Lemos (1994: 3–19).

extrinsic properties, which are the properties that objects have in virtue of contextual factors. The property of a person being of a certain height is an intrinsic property of that person, for although contextual factors can cause a person to become less tall with time, there is still a sense in which their height is just a matter of their own nature. The property of a person being the tallest person from the Netherlands is an extrinsic property, for contextual factors do more to explain the property than just causally determining who possesses it.¹⁹ While lacking in theoretical detail, this characterization will hopefully suffice for now.

It was once a commonplace to assume that final value was the same thing as intrinsic value so that if an object has value for its own sake, then the object is good in virtue of its intrinsic properties. Similarly, it was assumed that extrinsic value was the same thing as instrumental value so that if an object is good in virtue of its extrinsic properties, then the object is only good for the sake of something else. Korsgaard (1983: 170) challenged the assumption some decades ago when she argued that there are differences between questions about the *explanation* of value and questions about *the ways* in which objects are valuable.²⁰ She maintained that the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value marks differences between explanations of value, whereas the distinction between final and instrumental value marks differences between *the ways* in which things have value—e.g., whether it is typically fitting to treat something as a means toward an end or as an end in itself.²¹ We wish to pause on this for a moment longer as it is central to the suggestion that we are about to defend.

On the one hand, when we ask *why* certain objects are valuable, we are looking for an account of the factors that make the objects valuable; On the other hand, when we ask whether objects have value for the sake of their effects or for their own sakes, we are asking *in what way* the objects are valuable. If we take value to have a connection to fitting attitudes, then the difference can be made even more vivid. On the one hand, when we look for an account of the factors that make objects valuable,

¹⁹ The examples also show that not all intrinsic features are essential properties and that not all extrinsic features are accidental. The property of a person being of a certain height is an intrinsic property but also an accidental one (cf., Feldman 1998). The property of a licensed medical doctor standing in certain relations to various social and legal institutions is an extrinsic property of the medical doctor, but essential to her *qua* doctor. Also note that the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic properties is different from the distinction between non-relational and relational properties. While all extrinsic properties are relational properties, meaning that they are explained by the relations that their bearers have to other things, not all intrinsic properties are non-relational (Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000: 34). The property of a person having a left eye that is bigger than their right eye is a relational property, but it is also intrinsic (and accidental) to that person.

²⁰ Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen (2000) agree with the general distinction to which Korsgaard is appealing, between questions about the explanation of value and questions about in what way things are valuable, but they caution against a certain ambiguity in her occasional talk of the “source” of value. They suggest that within the explanation of value (the “source” of value, in Korsgaard’s terminology) there are the makers of the value (which they refer to by speaking in terms of “supervenience”) and there are the *constitutive grounds* of value. They argue that whether an object has intrinsic or extrinsic value is a matter of whether the value makers are intrinsic or extrinsic. Plausibly, there are additional distinctions to be made in the explanation of value, but we shall leave such subtleties aside and paint the explanation of final value with a very broad brush.

²¹ See also Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen (2000: 33, 36).

we are looking for an explanation of *why* the objects are the fitting targets of attitudes; On the other hand, when we ask *in what way* objects are valuable, we are asking about the nature of the attitudes of which they are the fitting targets: Is it fitting to favor the objects for their own sakes or is it fitting to favor them for the sake of something else?²² Korsgaard's suggestion implies that philosophers have been too quick in assuming that once we have established that certain objects are good for their own sakes, we can infer that the objects are good just in virtue of their intrinsic properties.²³ If she is right about this, then it should be relatively easy to come up with examples of things that have final value but in virtue of extrinsic features—i.e., cases where extrinsic properties make it fitting to favor objects as ends. As it happens, most of the arguments in support of extrinsic final value proceed by offering such examples. We cannot hope to defend extrinsic final value in detail in what follows but will outline some of the most commonly cited cases.

Shelly Gagan (1998: 282f) and John O'Neill (1992: 124) suggest that things can have final value in virtue of extrinsic properties such as *rarity*—like a stamp that is valuable for its own sake in virtue of being so unique. O'Neill (ibid 125) applies the same ideas within ecological ethics by arguing that a wilderness can be good for its own sake in part because it is untouched by human hands. The implication is that even though the value of a wilderness has something to do with its relation to human activities, this does not mean that it should be treated merely as a means. Wlodek Rabinowicz & Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen (2000) similarly suggest that artifacts can have final value because of their connection to some important object, event, or person from history. They mention the example of Princess Diana's dress, Napoleon's hat, and a gun that was used at Verdun—all of which are worthy of being treated as ends because of their historical features. They also support their case by pointing out that the attitudes that people tend to adopt towards these things is not of an instrumental kind. In other words, we do not just find the artifacts useful for some purpose, like establishing an indirect connection to a historical object, event, or person, but ascribe some independent value to the artefacts as such.²⁴

Korsgaard (1983: 185) and Gagan (1998: 283ff) go so far as to suggest that the final value of objects can even depend on their instrumental value—or, more precisely, on the same extrinsic features that make objects instrumentally good. The examples they discuss include such things as beautiful mink coats, gorgeously enameled frying pans, elegantly designed racing cars, and so on. Kagan (1998: 284) also mentions excellence in practical arts, which he suggests could have final value

²² If this is right, then to say that an attitude is held for the sake of something is not to suggest that it is held in the interest of that thing. Rather, the 'sake' expression is meant to convey something about the structure of the fitting attitudes that are directed at the objects. For a related discussion, see, e.g., Rønnow-Rasmussen (2011: ch. 5).

²³ It follows that not all final values are intrinsic and that not all extrinsic values are instrumental. The question whether all intrinsic values are final and whether all instrumental values are extrinsic will be left aside here, though we suspect that the answer to these questions is also 'no'.

²⁴ See Rabinowicz, Rønnow-Rasmussen (2000: 41). We make a similar point about death below.

because of their usefulness.²⁵ The specific example that he discusses is that of culinary skill, which he thinks is favored for its own sake because of its instrumental features. The intuition behind this and many of the other examples mentioned in this section seems to be that if the uses and effects of objects are significant enough, then it becomes fitting to favor the objects for their own sakes as well. We will appeal to this same intuition in the next section, where we defend the idea that death can have extrinsic but final value.

4 The Final Value of Death

While there is certainly room for disagreements about details, there are enough plausible examples to lend support to the notion of extrinsic final value. The general intuition that issues about the explanation of value differ from issues about *the way* in which things are valuable seems obviously correct. The question is which of these are most relevant for the deprivation account. Feldman and Bradley maintain that death only has extrinsic value, but do they thereby mean that death has value in virtue of its extrinsic properties, or are they also suggesting that it is only fitting to disfavor death in an instrumental way? Notwithstanding their occasional use of the term ‘instrumental value’ (which we here take to indicate something about *the way* in which objects are valuable), we think that Feldman and Bradley should both be understood along the former lines since they are interested in explaining *why* death can be bad. Their central claim is that death can be bad for those that die even when the *explanation* of its badness cannot be found among the intrinsic features of death.

If we take the standard deprivation account to claim that death is bad for those that die if and because it involves a deprivation of intrinsic goods, then it makes sense to ask whether death is finally or instrumentally bad. In other words, now that we have established *why* death can be bad for those that die, the question remains *in what way* death is bad: Is it bad as an end or merely as a means? Is it fitting to disfavor death for its own sake or for the sake of its effects? We suggest that the deprivation account is attractive to the extent that it is compatible with the view that death is bad for its own sake if and because it involves a deprivation.²⁶ This seems intuitive partly because people do not appear to disfavor death in the same way that they disfavor other deprivations of intrinsic goods. We the authors certainly do not. The negative attitudes that we personally hold toward our own future deaths do not

²⁵ Note that Bradley (2006: 114) himself recognizes that it makes sense to talk about extrinsic final value, though he refers to this as a kind of “intrinsic value”. If he disagrees that death is finally bad, then it is not because he is a skeptic about there being objects that have value for their own sakes in virtue of their extrinsic properties.

²⁶ It might be thought that if death is bad for its own sake, then it must *always* be bad, but this is again to confuse questions about what explains the presence of value with questions about the way in which things are good or bad. If we accept that final value can be extrinsic, then it is a small step to admit that final value is not a necessary or essential property of its bearer. Indeed, this conclusion is a tempting one even for final value that is intrinsic, for it seems conceivable that objects can be valuable for their own sake in virtue of intrinsic yet accidental properties.

have a purely instrumental character and we suspect that we are not unique in this regard.²⁷

Compare the attitudes that people tend to have toward death with the attitudes that are directed at other extrinsically valuable items, like falling in love or winning the lottery. We suspect that people tend to value death more like we tend to value falling in love than the way we tend to value winning the lottery. We ascribe merely instrumental value to winning the lottery (we value it for the sake of the good experiences that winning money will enable), whereas we at least ascribe final value to falling in love (we value falling in love for its own sake). Describing death as merely instrumentally bad would run counter to the intuitions of many, and we should rather say that death is bad for its own sake if and because it involves a deprivation of intrinsic goods.²⁸ It seems to us that if this view were to be incorporated into the deprivation account, then this would also grant it more explanatory power, for this would enable the deprivation account not only to explain *why* death can be bad for those that die but also *in what way* death can be bad.

The obvious response would be to suggest that while death may often be disfavored for its own sake, it is nevertheless unfitting to target death with these types of attitudes. Treating death as anything other than just instrumentally bad is irrational. However, it is unclear to us what reasons there are for making this claim that are not based on the conviction that final value cannot be extrinsic in the first place.²⁹ Again, we cannot offer a detailed defense of the notion of final extrinsic value here but would suggest that those that find it plausible should be attracted to the view that death has this type of value.

Reconsider the intuition that some objects have uses and effects that makes them special relative to other objects with extrinsic value. Excellence in practical arts and paper clips both have their uses, but those of the former are of a much more important kind than those of the latter—perhaps more central to the natures and everyday lives of human beings. So central are the uses of practical excellence that it becomes fitting to treat it as something more than a means toward other values, even if other values happen to figure in the explanation for why practical excellence should be treated as an end in the first place. Assuming that there are objects that are special in this sense, we find it difficult to think of a more plausible illustration than death itself. Death is bad in virtue of the deprivation of intrinsic goods that it involves, but the kind of deprivation that death represents is special relative to the deprivation that results from the cancellation of a baseball match, or any of the other mundane

²⁷ We are here interested in the question of whether death is bad for its own sake *for the person who dies*. For more in the general type of value alluded to here, where things have final value that relates to persons (so-called “personal final value”), see e.g., Rønnow-Rasmussen (2011: 58–68).

²⁸ The question might be asked whether our view commits us to saying that since death is bad for its own sake in those cases where it deprives people of more intrinsically good things than intrinsically bad things, death is good for its own sake in those cases where it deprives people of more intrinsically bad things than intrinsically good things. We are not sure about this. It might be bad for its own sake for us to move to another city because we are thereby made intrinsically worse off, but this does not appear to commit us to saying that staying put is finally good for us. All things considered, not moving can be neutral from the standpoint of final value.

²⁹ Obviously, another reason could of course be found in the conviction that death is just never bad.

deprivations of intrinsic goods that we tend to face in our everyday lives. The negative effects of death can be of such a character that it becomes fitting to disfavor death for its own sake.³⁰

The argument could be made that while the notion of extrinsic final value is plausible, it does not make sense to think of objects as being valuable for their own sakes in virtue of their causal effects. The thought is that this puts too much separation between instrumental value and the type of value that results from the causal relations of their bearers. We are not sure that this is really such a big problem. For one thing, it is unclear whether the claim that death is bad because of the deprivation of intrinsic goods that it involves commits us to the claim that death is bad specifically in virtue of its causal effects. Death may not have causal effects for the lives of those that die even if it has instrumental influence in the wider sense that it is modally implicated in making people worse off.³¹ However, perhaps this rejoinder misses what is meant to be so troubling with the objection under consideration, which is that we seem to allow that final value can be *derivative* in the sense that its explanation may have something to do with the instrumental influence that its bearers have on other values.³²

The idea that final value can be derivative will be confusing to those that think that the term ‘final value’ has an explanatory flavor that is meant to convey that its bearers represent the ‘final stop’ in some chain of values. It should therefore be kept in mind that what is meant by ‘final value’ here is not this fundamental type of value, but simply the type of value that accrues to objects that are good or bad for their own sakes. If objects have final value, then it is typically fitting to direct attitudes toward the objects for their own sakes, but the explanation for the fittingness need not be found among the intrinsic features of the objects. Given the distinction between questions about *why* things have value and questions about *in what way* things are valuable, it would be mysterious if final value could not be explained by reference to the instrumental influence that

³⁰ It should perhaps be noted that our suggestion runs up against the overall frameworks of Feldman and Bradley. For example, while they may not be fully committed to this view, Feldman (1991: 211ff) and Bradley (2009: 4) both assume that the only things that have final value are propositional entities, like states of affairs. If death is not a state of affairs but something like an event, then, on this assumption, death cannot have final value. Feldman and Bradley could still have accepted that the state of death having happened can be bad for its own sake were it not for their assumption of hedonism. This view maintains that only states of pleasure and pain can have final value, which obviously rules out death as well as the state of death having happened. We believe that both of these apparent problems can be easily mitigated, but we do not see the need to be conciliatory here. Our aim is not to accommodate everything that Feldman or Bradley have ever assumed in their respective works on death. Rather, we have tried to show that the intuition that death can be bad because of the deprivation that it represents is compatible and fits well with the intuition that death can be bad for its own sake. We are not too bothered if this combination of intuitions turns out to be incompatible with the overall frameworks of Feldman and Bradley.

³¹ There is an important task of disambiguating the different senses in which objects have “instrumental influence” and of explaining what this entails for our understanding of value. Regrettably, we cannot undertake the task here.

³² For a tentative defense of derivative final value, see Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen (2000; 2003).

its bearers have on other values.³³ The notion that final value cannot possibly be derivative in this sense needs an argument and cannot be assumed.

Now, we have seen that many cases of final value that are not intrinsic have been presented in the literature, but all of them are cases where objects are *good* for their own sakes and in virtue of their extrinsic properties. As far as we are aware, no examples have been offered of objects that are *bad* for their own sakes but in virtue of their extrinsic features. We think that death is a plausible case in point. Many of us fear death as such, but insofar as we believe ourselves to be doing so fittingly, it seems reasonable to suggest that the fittingness depends in part on death involving a deprivation—it robs us of intrinsically good things that we would otherwise have. However, we have shown that this does not mean that we are mistaken if we nevertheless disfavor death in a *final way*, meaning that we treat death itself as something that is bad for its own sake. It is appropriate to disfavor death as an end precisely because it leads to a relative deprivation of intrinsic goods. This entails that aside from providing the deprivation account with more explanatory power, the idea that we have just defended is also of a general interest to discussions about the nature of final value. Indeed, our suspicion is that thinking more closely about final badness and its potential for an explanations in terms of extrinsic properties may advance general discussions in value theory about what it might mean for things to be disfavored for their own sakes.

5 Concluding Remarks

The deprivation account states that death can be bad for those that die if and because it involves a deprivation of intrinsic goods. While the account is attractive, it seems at odds with intuitions that many have about the badness of death, at least insofar as it reduces its badness to something like an instrumental value. We have leaned on recent developments in analytic axiology and suggested that death can be bad for its own sake if and because it involves a deprivation of intrinsic goods. We have argued that this suggestion affords the deprivation account the power to explain both *why* death is bad for those that die and *in what way* death is bad. This means that while our suggestion may not affect the capability of the deprivation account to overcome

³³ It becomes even more mysterious when we consider the fact that evaluative content is not banned from the *intrinsic* explanation of final value. As far as we are aware, no one would argue that the intrinsic value of an object could not depend on the other intrinsic values possessed by that object. Furthermore, even if there are good reasons to accept such restrictions on the extrinsic explanation of final value, we wonder whether there might be a version of our suggestion that would be compatible with them. We have argued that death can be bad for its own sake if and because it involves a deprivation of intrinsic goods. However, we could also have suggested that death can be bad for its own sake and given a purely descriptive explanation for why this is so. For example, instead of saying that death at a given time would be bad for the authors because it would deprive us of intrinsically good things, like the happiness that we would otherwise get to experience, we could just say that death would be bad for us at that time because it would deprive us of happiness, leaving out any mention of the fact that happiness has intrinsic value. So, while the test for whether a deprivation makes death bad for its own sake may well be that the deprivation is one of intrinsic goods, this does not entail that intrinsic value as such enters into the explanation of death's value.

the problem of the missing subject, it makes *the way* in which it responds to the problem more intuitive. Secondly, we have argued that the suggestion benefits more general studies into the nature of final value as well, by providing a plausible example of something that has extrinsic but final badness. Much more could be said about all these topics, but at the very least we hope to have shown that discussions about the value of death can be advanced by being brought closer to more general discussions within analytic axiology, about the nature and behavior of different types of value.

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