

Reasons, Dispositions, and Value

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Thesis:

Buck-Passing accounts of value can respond to the *Central Challenge* by adopting a dispositionalist solution *without* taking on (extra) controversial metaphysical commitments (such as, to a particular account of the nature of dispositions)

Central Challenge:

Accommodate the following two claims:

Buck-Passing: *Reasons are metaphysically prior to value*

No Reasons: *There are possible worlds with value but without reasons*

Proposal:

Develop a dispositional reduction of value:
(DBP) For X to be valuable is for X to have a disposition to provide reasons

Wrinkle:

Intuitively, dispositions are prior to the manifestations they produce
(e.g. this vase's fragility is prior to its breaking)

The General Strategy:

Grant: Particular instances of dispositions are prior to their particular manifestations

Argue: For each of the main competing accounts of dispositions, manifestation types are prior to disposition types

Result: On every account, there could be instances of value without there being instances of reasons, but *value* (the type of disposition) could not be possible were *reasons* impossible

Counterfactual Analysis:

Dispositions are reducible to counterfactuals

Elimination Solution:

All talk of dispositions is just a convenient way of talking about counterfactuals

If value is a dispositional term, then it is just a way to talk about counterfactuals about reasons.

Value is eliminated from our ontology; Reasons remain

2nd Order Solution:

Dispositions are 2nd order properties regarding certain counterfactuals being true

Counterfactuals can be true, even when the manifestation conditions are not met, but there being a true counterfactual depends on the possibility of the consequent
(e.g. magnetizable and magnetic)

So, reasons are prior to counterfactuals about reasons

2nd Order resembles Scanlon's version of Buck Passing (*WWE*): Value is "the purely formal, higher-order properties of having some lower-order properties that provide reasons of the relevant kind."

Realism about Dispositions:

Dispositions are properties in their own right

(Ontological Priority: X is prior to Y iff Y is dependent on X, but not X on Y)

Essentialist Solution:

Essentialist Dependence: X is dependent on Y iff what it is to be X involves Y

What it is to be disposition D consists (in part) in its manifestation M (but not vice versa)

e.g. To be fragile is to have a certain potential to break, but what it is to break (as an event-kind) does not involve fragility

So, what it is to be valuable is to have a certain potential to provide reasons, but what it is to be a reason does not involve value

Both are compatible with Parfit's version of BP (*OWM*), which denies the *Negative Thesis* (that value itself never provides reasons)

Analogy between providing derivative reasons and allowing causal overdetermination.

Compatible with denying overdetermination: just accept the *Negative Thesis*

Modal-Existential Solution:

Methodology: infer metaphysical dependence from ontological implication

X is Modal-Existentially dependent on Y iff X cannot exist without Y

e.g. Being extended is an ontological implication of being colored, as everything colored is extended, so being colored depends on being extended.

When the ontological implications of a property extend into other possible worlds, using Modal-Existential methodology we should incorporate those implications into whatever we say about metaphysical dependence

e.g. This vase is fragile; a thing being fragile has the implication of the possibility of it breaking; the possibility of something breaking has the implication that *breaking* exists (or is possible). So, the vase being fragile metaphysically depends on (the possibility of) *breaking*.

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Modal-Existential Dependence: X is ME dependent on Y iff X cannot exist without Y

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___ *Priority:* X is ___ prior to Y iff Y is ___ dependent on X, but not X on Y

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Buck-Passing accounts of value can respond to the *Central Challenge*, by adopting a dispositionalist solution, *without* taking on (extra) controversial metaphysical commitments (such as to a particular nature of dispositions)

Grant:

Particular instances of dispositions are prior to their particular manifestations

The General Strategy:

Argue:

Manifestation types are prior to disposition types

Result:

There could be instances of value without there being instances of reasons, but *value* (the type of disposition) could not be possible were *reasons* impossible

Counterfactual Analysis:

Dispositions are reducible to counterfactuals (elimination or 2nd order properties)

Elimination: All talk of dispositions to be a convenient way of talking about counterfactuals

If value is a dispositional term, then it is just a convenient way to talk about counterfactuals about reasons.

Value is eliminated from our ontology; Reasons are kept

2nd Order Properties: Dispositions are 2nd order properties regarding counterfactuals

Counterfactuals can be true, even when the conditions are not met, but there being a true counterfactual depends on the possibility of the consequent (e.g. magnetizable and magnetic)

So, reasons are prior counterfactuals about reasons

2nd Order resembles Scanlon's version of Buck Passing (*What We Owe...*): Value is "the purely formal, higher-order properties of having some lower-order properties that provide reasons of the relevant kind."

Terminology:

Manifestation of a disposition: The resultant effect, property or event; e.g. breaking is the manifestation of fragility

Trigger of a disposition: The event, property, or object that makes a disposition manifest (aka manifestation conditions); e.g. being struck triggers the manifestation of fragility

Modal-Existential Dependence: X is ME dependent on Y iff X cannot exist without Y

Essentialist Dependence: X is E dependent on Y iff what it takes to be X involves Y

___ *Priority:* X is ___ prior to Y iff Y is ___ dependent on X, but not X on Y

Realism about Dispositions:

Dispositions are properties in their own right. Minimally, not reducible to propositions

Essentialist Solution:

What it is to be disposition D consists (in part) in its manifestation M (But not vice versa)

e.g. To be fragile is to have a certain potential to break, but what it is to break (as an event-kind) does not involve fragility

So, what it is to be valuable is to have a certain potential to provide reasons, but what it is to be a reason does not involve value

Compatible with Parfit's version of BP (*OWM*)

Where he denies the *Negative Thesis*
Analogy between providing derivative reasons and allowing causal overdetermination. (But also compatible with denying overdetermination: just accept the Negative Thesis)

Modal-Existential Solution:

Methodology: infer metaphysical dependence from ontological implication

e.g. Being extended is an ontological implication of being colored, as everything colored is extended, so being colored depends on being extended.

When the ontological implications of a property extend into other possible worlds, with MED methodology we should incorporate those implications into whatever we say about metaphysical dependence

e.g. This vase is fragile; a thing being fragile has the implication of the possibility it breaking; the possibility of something breaking has the implication that *breaking* exists (or is possible). So, the vase being fragile metaphysically depends on (the possibility of) *breaking*

The Central Challenge:

Accommodate the following two claims:

Buck-Passing: Reasons are metaphysically prior to value

No Reasons: There are possible worlds with value but without reasons

Reasons, Dispositions, and Value

Aaron P. Elliott,

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The Proposal:

Develop a dispositional reduction of value: (DBP) For X to be valuable is for X to have a disposition to provide reasons.

The Wrinkle:

Dispositions seem prior to manifestations? Does this preserve the priority of reasons over value?

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Analogy between providing derivative reasons and allowing causal overdetermination. (But also compatible with denying overdetermination: just accept the Negative Thesis)

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