Chapter 6

The Intrinsic and Instrumental Values of Diversity and the Settlement of the Conflicts between Them: Some Philosophical and Legal Considerations

In this paper I shall try to highlight two basic values—intrinsic and instrumental values—that exist in the world and illustrate, in a more or less impressionistic way, how these values may manifest themselves in matters relating to diversity and how conflicts in general and conflicts specifically relating to diversity can be seen as conflicts of these values. This is a tentative attempt, meant to bring out into the open some implicit ways of or framework for seeing and rationalizing the world, and to generalize the issues to a certain level so as to order our examination, analysis and rationalization in a better way. In so doing, I hope to help deepen our understanding of diversity, improve the quality of relevant decision-making, and ultimately promote it in however small a way.

I. Intrinsic and Instrumental Values as Two Basic Values

Probably one would agree that I do not need any footnotes to talk about this idea. Probably one may even say that the very talk of it is cliché. The idea is basically this. For almost everything or every phenomenon in the world, one can find in it or assign to it two values: intrinsic value and instrumental value. This is also true with human beings. As we will see, each value is virtuous in a different way. Often “inherent” is used as synonymous with “intrinsic”. The latter will be primarily used here, because “inherent” sometimes is too protean a term.

As is also cliché, an instrumental value is that which is good only as an instrument for something else. I want one US Dollar not to keep it for good, but to use it to buy a cup of coffee. The dollar bill is an instrument for me to obtain my coffee. On the other hand, an intrinsic value is an end value in itself. For example, my experience is an intrinsic value to me: it is unique and it forms part of me, my personhood, and that’s it. Period. Without insisting on particular wording to define these terms, one can generally agree: “That which is intrinsically good is nonderivatively good; it is good for its own sake. That which is not intrinsically good but extrinsically good is derivatively good; it is good, not (insofar as its extrinsic value is concerned) for its own sake, but for the sake of something else that is good and to which it is related in some way.”

Generally speaking, the two values may exist in the same thing at once: a value, independently evaluated, can be an intrinsic value; yet it may be an instrument for another intrinsic value. To this extent, these two values signify ways of seeing values and the world. One may see one value or another, depending on one’s world view and orientation.

As is obvious, what follows from being treated as an instrumental value may be vastly different from what follows from being treated as an intrinsic value. For example, if indeed we are so special as an end in itself or as ends in ourselves, as Kant taught us, we (or humanity) would reign supreme as end units, and not as instrumental units for the glory of the community, nation, society, or even God. If we were only instrumental members in a community, nation, society, or fellowship in Christ, we would have to sacrifice us for the benefit of the community, nation, society, or God. Of course, closer to the truth is the position that both values may co-exist in us; and one may inform or promote the other. When they do come into conflict, which one should prevail is a perennial question.

An instrumental value will expire when the end for which the instrumental value is an instrument has been achieved. That is to say, the *raison d’être* of the instrumental value no longer exists and the instrumental value should not exist any further. In contrast, an intrinsic value, or an end in itself, may not expire as a value, although I am not sure whether it is wise to say

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2 See generally Kant, The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (1785); for an analysis of the humanity formula, see the entry on this in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/#HumFor).