

**Bibliography on the Buck-Passing Account of Value**Jörg Schroth ([jschrot@gwdg.de](mailto:jschrot@gwdg.de))**Last Update: 26.11.2010**

Alphabetische Ordnung / alphabetical order:

<http://www.ethikseite.de/bib/bbuck.pdf>

Chronologische Ordnung / reverse chronological order:

<http://www.ethikseite.de/bib/cbuck.pdf>

- 2010 [1] Brunero, John (2010): Consequentialism and the Wrong Kind of Reasons: A Reply to Lang, *Utilitas* 22, S. 351–59.<sup>1</sup> – Zu Lang 2008.
- 2010 [2] Darwall, Stephen (2010): “But It Would Be Wrong”, *Social Philosophy and Policy* 27, S. 135–57.<sup>2</sup>
- 2010 [3] Heuer, Ulrike (2010): Wrongness and Reasons, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 13, S. 137–52.<sup>3</sup>
- 2010 [4] Liao, S. Matthew (2010): The Buck-Passing Account of Value: Lessons from Crisp, *Philosophi-*

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<sup>1</sup> “In his article ‘The Right Kind of Solution to the Wrong Kind of Reason Problem’, Gerald Lang formulates the buck-passing account of value so as to resolve the Wrong Kind of Reason Problem. I argue against his formulation of buck-passing. Specifically, I argue that his formulation of buck-passing is not compatible with consequentialism (whether direct or indirect), and so it should be rejected.”

<sup>2</sup> “Is the fact that an action would be wrong itself a reason not to perform it? Warranted attitude accounts of value suggest “buck-passing” about value, that being valuable is not itself a reason but “passes the buck” to the reasons for valuing something in which its value consists. Would a warranted attitude account of moral obligation and wrongness, not entail, therefore, that being morally obligatory or wrong gives no reason for action itself? I argue that this is not true. Although warranted attitude theories of normative concepts entail buck-passing with respect to reasons for the specific attitudes that are inherently involved in the concept, the concepts of moral obligation and wrong are normative not in the first instance for action, but for a distinctive set of attitudes (Strawsonian “reactive attitudes”) through which we hold ourselves and one another answerable for our actions. On this analysis, moral obligations are demands we legitimately make as representative persons, and the fact that an act would violate such a demand, and so disrespect the authority these demands presuppose, is indeed a reason not to perform the wrongful act that is additional to whatever features make the act wrong.”

<sup>3</sup> “Is the wrongness of an action a reason not to perform it? Of course it is, you may answer. That an action is wrong both explains and justifies not doing it. Yet, there are doubts. Thinking that wrongness is a reason is confused, so an argument by Jonathan Dancy. There can’t be such a reason if ‘?-ing is wrong’ is verdictive, and an all things considered judgment about what (not) to do in a certain situation. Such judgments are based on all the relevant reasons for and against ?-ing. If that ?-ing is wrong, while being an all things considered verdict, would itself be a reason, it would upset the balance of reasons: it would be a further reason which has not yet been considered in reaching the verdict. Hence, the judgment wasn’t ‘all things considered’ after all. I show that the argument against wrongness being a reason is unsuccessful, because its main assumption is false. Its main assumption is that a consideration which necessarily does not affect the balance of reasons is not a reason. I also argue that there can be no deontic buck-passing account.”

- 2010 [5] Wallace, R. Jay (2010): Reasons, Values and Agent-Relativity, *Dialectica* 64, S. 503–28.<sup>5</sup>
- 2009 [6] Brännmark, Johan (2009): Goodness, Values, Reasons, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 12, S. 329–43.<sup>6</sup>
- 2009 [7] Crisp, Roger (2009): Goodness and Reasons: A Response to Stratton-Lake, *Mind* 118, S. 1095–99.<sup>7</sup> – Zu Stratton-Lake 2009.
- 2009 [8] Louise, Jennie (2009): Correct Responses and the Priority of the Normative, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 12, S. 345–64.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “T. M. Scanlon’s buck-passing account of value (BPA) has been subjected to a barrage of criticisms. Recently, to be helpful to BPA, Roger Crisp has suggested that a number of these criticisms can be met if one makes some revisions to BPA. In this paper, I argue that if advocates of the buck-passing account accepted these revisions, they would effectively be giving up the buck-passing account as it is typically understood, that is, as an account concerned with the conceptual priority of reasons or the right vis-à-vis value or the good. I conclude by addressing some of the broader implications of my arguments for the current debate about the buck-passing account of value.”

<sup>5</sup> “According to T. M. Scanlon’s buck-passing account, the normative realm of reasons is in some sense prior to the domain of value. Intrinsic value is not itself a property that provides us with reasons; rather, to be good is to have some other reason-giving property, so that facts about intrinsic value amount to facts about how we have reason to act and to respond. The paper offers an interpretation and defense of this approach to the relation between reasons and values. I start by acknowledging the role that substantive values play in specifications of our reasons, noting that this poses an apparent challenge to the buck-passing account. The challenge can be met, however, if we adopt a deliberative understanding of substantive value, an interpretation that I proceed to develop and defend. In conclusion I consider recent attempts to capture the agent-relativity of reasons within a teleological framework for thinking about the relation between reasons and values. I argue that these approaches rest on a deliberative understanding of value; the teleological framework thus turns out to illustrate the basic insight of the buck-passing approach, rather than offering an alternative to it.”

<sup>6</sup> “Contemporary value theory has been characterized by a renewed interest in the analysis of concepts like “good” or “valuable”, the most prominent pattern of analysis in recent years being the so-called buck-passing or fitting-attitude analysis which reduces goodness to a matter of having properties that provide reasons for pro-attitudes. Here I argue that such analyses are best understood as metaphysical rather than linguistic and that while the buck-passing analysis has some virtues, it still fails to provide a suitably wide-ranging pattern of analysis for conceptualizing evaluative properties. Instead, a better alternative can be found in a metaphysical version of the Geachean view that goodness is always attributive and never predicative, namely that goodness is always a matter of relative placement in certain kinds of comparison classes. It is then suggested that the good and the valuable need to be separated from each other and that the latter is a species of the former.”

<sup>7</sup> “This article is a response to some of Philip Stratton-Lake’s criticisms of an earlier paper of mine in this journal, on the so-called ‘buck-passing’ account of goodness. Some elucidation is offered of the ‘wrong kind of reasons’ problem and of T. M. Scanlon’s view, and the question is raised of the role of goodness in the view outlined by Stratton-Lake.”

<sup>8</sup> “The ‘Wrong Kind of Reason’ problem for buck-passing theories (theories which hold that the normative is explanatorily or conceptually prior to the evaluative) is to explain why the existence of pragmatic or strategic reasons for some response to an object does not suffice to ground evaluative claims about that object. The only workable reply seems to be to deny that there are reasons of the ‘wrong kind’ for responses, and to

- 2009 [9] Olson, Jonas (2009): Fitting Attitude Analyses of Value and the Partiality Challenge, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 12, S. 365–78.<sup>9</sup>
- 2009 [10] Olson, Jonas (2009): The Wrong Kind of Solution to the Wrong Kind of Reason Problem, *Utilitas* 21, S. 225–32.<sup>10</sup>
- 2009 [11] Reisner, Andrew E. (2009): Abandoning the Buck Passing Analysis of Final Value, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 12, S. 379–95.<sup>11</sup>
- 2009 [12] Schroeder, Mark (2009): Buck-Passers’ Negative Thesis, *Philosophical Explorations* 12, S. 341–47.<sup>12</sup>

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argue that these are really reasons for wanting, trying, or intending to have that response. In support of this, it is pointed out that awareness of pragmatic or strategic considerations, unlike awareness of reasons of the ‘right kind’, are never sufficient by themselves to produce the responses for which they are reasons. I argue that this phenomenon cannot be used as a criterion for distinguishing reasons-for-a-response from reasons-for-wanting-to-have-a-response. I subsequently investigate the possibility of basing this distinction on a claim that the responses in question (e.g. admiration or desire) are themselves inherently normative; I conclude that this approach is also unsuccessful. Hence, the ‘direct response’ phenomenon cannot be used to rule out the possibility of pragmatic or strategic reasons for responses; and the rejection of such reasons therefore cannot be used to circumvent the Wrong Kind of Reason Problem.”

<sup>9</sup> “According to ‘Fitting Attitude’ (FA) analyses of value, for an object to be valuable is for that object to have properties – other than its being valuable – that make it a fitting object of certain responses. In short, if an object is positively valuable it is fitting to favour it; if an object is negatively valuable it is fitting to disfavour it. There are several variants of FA analyses. Some hold that for an object to be valuable is for it to be such that it ought to be favoured; others hold that value is analyzable in terms of reasons or requirements to favour. All these variants of the FA analysis are subject to a partiality challenge: there are circumstances in which some agents have reasons to favour or disfavour some object – due to the personal relations in which they stand to the object – without this having any bearing on the value of the object. A. C. Ewing was one of the first philosophers to draw attention to the partiality challenge for FA analyses. In this paper I explain the challenge and consider Ewing’s responses, one of which is preferable to the other, but none of which is entirely satisfactory. I go on to develop an alternative Brentano-inspired response that Ewing could have offered and that may well be preferable to the responses Ewing actually did offer.”

<sup>10</sup> “The so-called Wrong Kind of Reason (WKR) problem for Scanlon’s ‘buck-passing’ account of value has been much discussed recently. In a recent issue of *Utilitas* Gerald Lang provides a highly useful critique of extant proposed solutions to the WKR problem and suggests a novel solution of his own. In this note I offer a critique of Lang’s solution and respond to some criticisms Lang directs at a Brentano-style approach suggested by Sven Danielsson and me.”

<sup>11</sup> “In this paper it is argued that the buck-passing analysis (BPA) of final value is not a plausible analysis of value and should be abandoned. While considering the influential wrong kind of reason problem and other more recent technical objections, this paper contends that there are broader reasons for giving up on buck-passing. It is argued that the BPA, even if it can respond to the various technical objections, is not an attractive analysis of final value. It is not attractive for two reasons: the first being that the BPA lacks the features typical of successful conceptual analyses and the second being that it is unable to deliver on the advantages that its proponents claim for it. While not offering a knock-down technical refutation of the BPA, this paper aims to show that there is little reason to think that the BPA is correct, and that it should therefore be given up as an analysis of final value.”

<sup>12</sup> “Buck-passers about value accept two theses about value, a negative thesis and a positive. The negative thesis is that the fact that something is valuable is not itself a reason to promote or appreciate it. The positive thesis is that the fact that something is valuable consists in the fact that there are other reasons to promote or

- 2009 [13] Stratton-Lake, Philip (2009): Roger Crisp on Goodness and Reasons, *Mind* 118, S. 1081–94.<sup>13</sup> – Dazu: Crisp 2009.
- 2009 [14] Suikkanen, Jussi (2009): Buck-Passing Accounts of Value, *Philosophy Compass* 4, S. 768–79.<sup>14</sup>
- 2008 [15] Brännmark, Johan (2008): Excellence and Means: On the Limits of Buck-Passing, *Journal of Value Inquiry* 42, S. 301–15.
- 2008 [16] Cook, Philip (2008): An Augmented Buck-Passing Account of Reasons and Value: Scanlon and Crisp on What Stops the Buck, *Utilitas* 20, S. 490–507.<sup>15</sup>
- 2008 [17] Crisp, Roger (2008): Goodness and Reasons: Accentuating the Negative, *Mind* 117, S. 257–65.<sup>16</sup>

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appreciate it. Buck-passers suppose that the negative thesis follows from the positive one, and sometimes insist on it as if it is the central part of their view. But as I'll explain here, what we say about the negative thesis is orthogonal to what we say about the positive one."

- <sup>13</sup> "Roger Crisp distinguishes a positive and a negative aspect of the buck-passing account of goodness (BPA), and argues that the positive account should be dropped in order to avoid certain problems, in particular, that it implies eliminativism about value. This eliminativism involves what I call an ontological claim, the claim that there is no real property of goodness, and an error theory, the claim that all value talk is false. I argue first that the positive aspect of the BPA is necessary to explain the negative aspect. I accept the ontological claim but argue that this does not imply any sort of error theory about value."
- <sup>14</sup> "This paper explores the so-called buck-passing accounts of value. These views attempt to use normative notions, such as reasons and ought to explain evaluative notions, such as goodness and value. Thus, according to Scanlon's well-known view, the property of being good is the formal, higher-order property of having some more basic properties that provide reasons to have certain kind of valuing attitudes towards the objects. I begin by tracing some of the long history of such accounts. I then describe the arguments which are typically used to motivate these views. The rest of this article investigates how some of the central details of the buck-passing accounts should be specified, and what kind of problems these views face."
- <sup>15</sup> "Roger Crisp has inspired two important criticisms of Scanlon's buck-passing account of value. I defend buck-passing from the wrong kind of reasons criticism, and the reasons and the good objection. I support Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen's dual role of reasons in refuting the wrong kind of reasons criticism, even where its authors claim it fails. Crisp's reasons and the good objection contends that the property of goodness is buck-passing in virtue of its formality. I argue that Crisp conflates general and formal properties, and that Scanlon is ambiguous about whether the formal property of a reason can stop the buck. Drawing from Wallace, I respond to Crisp's reasons and the good objection by developing an augmented buck-passing account of reasons and value, where the buck is passed consistently from the formal properties of both to the substantive properties of considerations and evaluative attitudes. I end by describing two unresolved problems for buck-passers."
- <sup>16</sup> "This paper concerns the relation between goodness, or value, and practical reasons, and in particular the so-called 'buck-passing' account (BPA) of that relation recently offered by T. M. Scanlon, according to which goodness is not reason-providing but merely the higher-order property of possessing lower-order properties that provide reasons to respond in certain ways. The paper begins by briefly describing BPA and the motivation for it, noting that Scanlon now accepts that the lower-order properties in question may be evaluative. He also insists that the BPA is not biconditional (wisely, since otherwise goodness becomes a 'Cambridge property'), which leaves him with the task of explaining why goodness arises only in a sub-set of cases in which lower-order properties ground reasons. Having rejected two attempts to do this, based on elucidation of the responses and of the reasons, I suggest that Scanlon may claim that goodness arises in, and only in, cases where the lower-order properties are evaluative and that goodness itself provides us with a way of distinguishing the evaluative from the non-evaluative. In other words, he should retain the negative component of BPA, according to which being good is not itself reason-providing, while surrendering the

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- 2007 [19] Danielsson, Sven/Olson, Jonas (2007): Brentano and the Buck-Passers, *Mind* 116, S. 511–22.<sup>18</sup>
- 2007 [20] Fjellström, Roger (2007): Signal, Definition, Function, Constitution or What? A Question about the Relation between Value and Reason-Giving in the Buckpassing Account of Value, in *Hommage à Wlodek. Philosophical Papers Dedicated to Wlodek Rabinowicz*, hrsg. von Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, Björn Petersson, Jonas Josefsson und Dan Egonsson, <http://www.fil.lu.se/hommageawlodek/>.<sup>19</sup>
- 2007 [21] Halbig, Christoph (2007): *Praktische Gründe und die Realität der Moral*, Frankfurt a. M., S. 137–40.
- 2007 [22] Olson, Jonas (2007): Buck-Passing and the Consequentialism/Deontology Distinction, in *Hommage à Wlodek. Philosophical Papers Dedicated to Wlodek Rabinowicz*, hrsg. von Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, Björn Petersson, Jonas Josefsson und Dan Egonsson, <http://www.fil.lu.se/hommageawlodek/>.<sup>20</sup>

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positive, according to which the property of goodness is merely the higher-order property of having lower-order properties that provide reasons to respond.”

<sup>17</sup> “Recent discussion of Scanlon’s ‘buck-passing’ account of value, which analyses the value of X in terms of agents’ reasons for having certain pro-attitudes or contra-attitudes towards X, has generated the ‘wrong kind of reason’ problem (WKR problem): this is the problem, for the buck-passing view, of being able to acknowledge that there may be good reasons for attributing final value to X that have nothing to do with the final value that X actually possesses. I briefly review some of the existing solutions offered to the WKR problem, including those by Philip Stratton-Lake and Jonas Olson, and offer a new, better one, which accommodates all the relevant cases presented in the literature.”

<sup>18</sup> “According to T. M. Scanlon’s ‘buck-passing’ analysis of value, *x is good* means that *x has properties that provide reasons to take up positive attitudes vis-à-vis x*. Some authors have claimed that this idea can be traced back to Franz Brentano, who said in 1889 that the judgement that *x* is good is the judgement that a positive attitude to *x* is correct (*‘richtig’*). The most discussed problem in the recent literature on buckpassing is known as the ‘wrong kind of reason’ problem (the WKR problem): it seems quite possible that there is sometimes reason to favour an object although that object is not good and possibly very evil. The problem is to delineate exactly what distinguishes reasons of the right kind from reasons of the wrong kind. In this paper we offer a Brentano-style solution. We also note that one version of the WKR problem was put forward by G. E. Moore in his review of the English translation of Brentano’s *Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis*. Before getting to how our Brentano-style approach might offer a way out for Brentano and the buck-passers, we briefly consider and reject an interesting attempt to solve the WKR problem recently proposed by John Skorupski.”

<sup>19</sup> “The so called ‘buck-passing account of value’ claims to offer an account to the effect that the value, or goodness, of things is amenable to the existence of some natural properties giving us reason for certain pro-reactions. This essay argues that we hardly can accept that. The offer is obscure already when we consider the relation assumed in BPA to obtain between value and reason-giving. Once the various forms of this relation are distinguished BPA appears implausible or not more than a research program. As to the much debated ‘wrong kind of reason argument’ that Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen have developed, it is shown to be a trap for buck-passers.”

<sup>20</sup> “According to T.M. Scanlon’s ‘buck-passing’ account of value, for something to be valuable is not for it to possess value as a simple and unanalysable property, but rather to have other properties that provide reasons to take up an attitude in favour of it or against it or to act in certain ways in regard to it. Jonathan Dancy has argued that passing the buck threatens to resolve prematurely the debate between consequentialism and

- 2007 [23] Rønnow-Rasmussen, Toni (2007): Analysing Personal Value, *Journal of Ethics* 11, S. 405–35.<sup>21</sup>
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deontology in favour of consequentialism (Dancy 2000). In this paper I shall discuss this claim. Section II suggests that Dancy's objection is well-founded, but not in the precise sense he imagines. Dancy's instructive criticism raises another intriguing question that will be dealt with in section III. The question is this: given that the buck-passing account of value is accepted, to what extent can we draw a distinction between consequentialism and deontology? The way in which Scanlon might answer this question would nullify Dancy's worry, but it suffers from other problems. Ultimately, I shall suggest that the buck-passing account does reduce the conceptual space for the consequentialism/deontology distinction, but that the ways in which it does so are tolerable. There remain a number of useful distinctions between normative theories that the buck-passer is entitled to draw. Some of those capture important aspects of what intuitively divides consequentialists and deontologists."

<sup>21</sup> "It is argued that the so-called fitting attitude- or buck-passing pattern of analysis may be applied to personal values too (and not only to impersonal values, which is the standard analysandum) if the analysis is fine-tuned in the following way: An object has personal value for a person a, if and only if there is reason to favour it for a's sake (where "favour" is a place-holder for different pro-responses that are called for by the value bearer). One benefit with it is its wide range: different kinds of values are analysable by the same general formula. Moreover, by situating the distinguishing quality in the attitude rather than the reason part, the analysis admits that personal value is recognizable as a value not only by the person for whom it has personal value, but for everyone else too. We thereby avoid facing two completely different notions of value, viz., one pertaining to impersonal value, and another to personal value. The analysis also elucidates why we are (at least pro tanto) justified in our concern for objects that are valuable for us; if value just is, as it is suggested, the existence of reasons for such a concern, the justification is immediately forthcoming."

<sup>22</sup> "The 'buck-passing account' of goodness, as T. M. Scanlon dubbed it, is by now both familiar and much controverted. Saying that a thing is good, according to the buck-passer, is saying no more than that some unspecified facts constitute sufficient reason for some unspecified pro-act or attitude towards it. Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen have presented objections to this account with clarity and fair-mindedness, objections to which I shall respond in section 3. But I begin with some stage-setting remarks about normativity and reasons in section 1, and then consider how to formulate the buck-passing account in section 2."

<sup>23</sup> "T. M. Scanlon has revived a venerable tradition according to which something's being good consists in its being such that there is a reason to respond positively towards it. He has presented novel arguments for this thesis. In this article, I first develop some refinements of the thesis with a view to focusing on intrinsic value in particular, then discuss the relation between the thesis and consequentialism, then critically examine Scanlon's arguments for the thesis, and finally turn to the question whether we should reject the thesis on the grounds that, when there is a reason to respond positively towards something, this is so because the thing in question is good. Two appendices follow. In the first, I discuss whether it is good to do right. In the second, I discuss whether an act's being wrong provides a reason not to do it."

<sup>24</sup> "The buck-passing account of values offers an explanation of the close relation of values and reasons for action: of why it is that the question whether something that is of value provides reasons is not "open." Being

- 2006 [28] Olson, Jonas (2006): G. E. Moore on Goodness and Reasons, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 84, S. 525–34.<sup>25</sup>
- 2006 [29] Rabinowicz, Wlodek/Rønnow-Rasmussen, Toni (2006): Buck-Passing and the Right Kind of Reasons, *Philosophical Quarterly* 56, S. 114–20.<sup>26</sup>
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of value simply is, its defenders claim, a property that something has in virtue of its having other reason-providing properties. The generic idea of buck-passing is that the property of being good or being of value does not provide reasons. It is other properties that do. There are, however, at least three versions of the account which differ in their understanding of those “other properties.” The first two versions both assume that non-normative properties provide reasons, the difference being that the second allows that normative properties also provide reasons. Both run into difficulties, which I explain, in trying to defend the claim that non-normative properties provide reasons for action. The third version of the buck-passing account which explains being of value in terms of more specific evaluative properties that are reason-providing remains unpersuasive as well. Once we understand the relation between general and specific properties as a difference in degree, there is no space for a reduction of the one kind of properties to the other. In section II I sketch an alternative account of the relation between reasons and values, which is based on a thesis that I call the Conceptual Link and the claim that values are not just co-extensive with reasons, but explain them.”

<sup>25</sup> “Several proponents of the ‘buck-passing’ account of value have recently attributed to G. E. Moore the implausible view that goodness is reason-providing. I argue that this attribution is unjustified. In addition to its historical significance, the discussion has an important implication for the contemporary value-theoretical debate: the plausible observation that goodness is not reason-providing does not give decisive support to the buck-passing account over its Moorean rivals. The final section of the paper is a survey of what can be said for and against the buck-passing account and Moore’s views about goodness and reasons.”

<sup>26</sup> “The ‘buck-passing’ account equates the value of an object with the existence of reasons to favour it. As we argued in an earlier paper, this analysis faces the ‘wrong kind of reasons’ problem: there may be reasons for pro-attitudes towards worthless objects, in particular if it is the pro-attitudes, rather than their objects, that are valuable. Jonas Olson has recently suggested how to resolve this difficulty: a reason to favour an object is of the right kind only if its formulation does not involve any reference to the attitudes for which it provides a reason. We argue that despite its merits, Olson’s solution is unsatisfactory. We go on to suggest that the buck-passing account might be acceptable even if the problem in question turns out to be insoluble.”

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- 2003 [37] McNaughton, David/Rawling, Piers (2003): Can Scanlon Avoid Redundancy by Passing the Buck?, *Analysis* 63, S. 328–331.
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- 1998 [39] Scanlon, T. M. (1998): *What We Owe to Each Other*, Cambridge, Mass., S. 95–98.

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<sup>27</sup> “In this article, I will defend the so-called “buck-passing” theory of value. According to this theory, claims about the value of an object refer to the reason-providing properties of the object. The concept of value can thus be analyzed in terms of reasons and the properties of objects that provide them for us. Reasons in this context are considerations that count in favour of certain attitudes. There are four other possibilities of how the connection between reasons and value might be formulated. For example, we can claim that value is a property that provides us with reasons to choose an option that has this property. I argue that none of these four other options can ultimately be defended, and therefore the buck-passing account is the one we ought to accept as the correct one. The case for the buck-passing account becomes even stronger, when we examine the weak points of the most pressing criticism against this account thus far.”