‘They Smiled at the Good and Frowned at the Bad’

The Fitting Attitude Analysis Reconsidered

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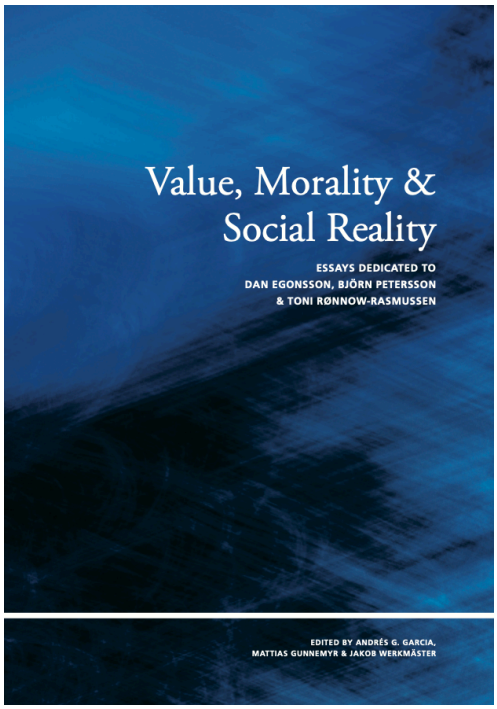

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1. Introduction

‘They smiled at the good and frowned at the bad’, the famous children’s story tells us about Madeleine and her friends. We all agree that these smiles and frowns are in some sense fitting. It seems fitting to favour the good and disfavour the bad. This intuition (call it the fundamental fittingness intuition) almost feels like a truism. Indeed, it has become increasingly popular to try to turn this intuition into an explicit definition of value in terms of fitting attitudes. Furthermore, it is often assumed that to say that an attitude is fitting is to say something *deontic* rather than something evaluative. The resulting account, the fitting attitude analysis of value (the FA-analysis, for short), thus promises a reduction of the evaluative to the deontic.

However, what seems to be such a simple and compelling intuition has been shown to be fraught with difficulties when understood as an explicit definition of value. The friends of the FA-analysis have provided many ingenious replies, but we are far from reaching a consensus about whether these replies are successful.[1]

My aim in this paper is not to add some new objections to the FA-analysis or some new replies to old objections. I think it is time to take a step back and reconsider the reasons that led people to accept the account in the first place. Are these reasons always compelling? Do they univocally speak in favour of a reductive definition of value in terms of the deontic? I shall argue that the answer to each

[1] I count Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, to whom this paper is dedicated, as one of the leading proponents of the FA-analysis and someone who has given some of the most ingenious replies.

question is 'No'.[2] The most important considerations that led people to adopt the FA-analysis can in fact be taken into account by a *value primitivist* who thinks goodness is not analyzable in terms of the deontic.[3] If this is correct, then, in light of all the objections to the FA-analysis, one should seriously ask oneself whether this analysis is worth the price. Why bother with patching up the FA-analysis, if value primitivism captures the most important intuitions that motivated the FA-analysis in the first place and, in addition, avoids its problems?

The paper is structured as follows. In Sections 2, I shall give a fuller characterization of the FA-analysis. In Section 3, I shall briefly present the most important objections to the FA-analysis. In Section 4, I shall discuss the main considerations that are taken to support this analysis. I shall show that these considerations are either not very compelling or when they do support the FA-analysis they also support a value primitivist account of value. The best version of the value primitivist account of value shares all the important virtues with the FA-analysis without falling prey to the objections that haunt this analysis. Section 5 concludes.

2. What Is the Fitting Attitude Analysis of Value?

Common to any complete FA-account is that it embraces the fitting attitude biconditional schemas for value (the FA-schema, for short):

FA-schemas:

x is good iff it is fitting for S to favour x.

x is bad iff it is fitting for S to disfavour x

x is neutral iff it is fitting for S to be neutral towards x.

x is better than y iff it is fitting for S to prefer x to y.[4]

x is equally as good as y iff it is fitting for S to be indifferent between x and y.

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[2] Reisner (2009) also provides some interesting arguments for a negative answer to these questions, but he focuses mainly on the question whether the FA-analyst unwarrantedly relies on certain value intuitions.

[3] Value primitivism is thus just the denial of the reduction of the evaluative to the *deontic*. It does not exclude the reduction of some evaluative notions to others.

[4] Different notions of preference can be employed here. The main distinction is between the notion of a two-place attitude, such as a disposition to choose one item over another when presented with a choice, and the notion of a comparison of strength between two monadic attitudes: one item is more strongly favoured or less strongly disfavoured than another.

FA-schemas are supposed to be necessarily true and the right hand side in each conditional is more fundamental, either because the concept of the relevant value is analyzed in terms of the concept of fitting attitude, or because the property of value is analyzed in terms of the property of fitting attitude. I will mainly focus on the conceptual version of the FA-analysis, since this is the most popular version, but most of my points can be applied to its ontological cousin as well.

One important dimension along which FA-analyses differ is scope. The most ambitious version of the FA-analysis would analyze *all* evaluative notions in terms of fitting attitudes. A less ambitious form would analyze some but not all evaluative notions in this way. My main target in this paper is this more ambitious version, since it is only this version that can be said to offer a *wholesale* reduction of the evaluative to the deontic.

FA-analyses may also differ as to which deontic notion is being invoked in the analysans of value. Most defenders of the FA-analysis agree that it is not enough to say that the good is what it is fitting to favour and leave it at that, because the term 'fitting' is very ambiguous. For simplicity, I shall use the term 'fitting' in the following as a place-holder for some candidate deontic notion when the discussion does not require a choice of a specific deontic notion.

Another factor that is crucial for a complete FA-analysis is the choice of *subjects* of fitting attitudes: When x is good, for *whom* is it fitting to favour x? Plausibly, this depends on which value we are talking about. For example, when something is good for me but not you (part of my well-being but not yours) it is perhaps fitting for me but not you to favour it. But when something has intrinsic value or final value it is fitting for *everyone* to favour it (if they were in the right epistemic situation in relation to what is assigned value). Indeed, that intrinsic value is objective seems to be the standard view in the FA-camp, and I shall assume this in the following.[5]

3. The Problems with the Fitting Attitude Analysis

3.1 Two Circularity Threats

(a) Favouring with evaluative content?

An old objection to the FA-analysis is that in many cases the fitting attitude will have evaluative content.[6] For example, if you are admirable, the fitting response is admiration. But admiration of you can't just be some brute liking of you or the features that make you admirable. After all, I can just happen to like you and the

[5] One further complication that I sidestep here is that it might be fitting for a subject to not just favour something, but to favour something *for certain specific kinds of reasons*. For example, when it is fitting to admire someone it seems fitting to admire the person *for her strengths and achievements*.

[6] See, for instance, Ross (1939) pp. 276, 278 and Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004), p. 395.

particular achievements that explain your admirability. To admire you I also seem to need to judge your achievement as something *good*. But if this is conceded, defining admirability in terms of judging something as good would give us a circular account. One kind of goodness, admirability, is defined in terms of judging as good.

The value primitivist can simply side-step this issue and just accept that some goods merit a response in terms of evaluative attitudes. There is no need to adopt circular definitions or appeal to value experiences that don't require the possession of value concepts.

(b) Evaluative notion of fittingness?

It is crucial for a reductive FA-analysis that the notion 'fitting' can be understood in purely deontic terms. However, it is striking that very few defenders of the FA-analysis invoke paradigmatic deontic notions such as *obligation* and *duty*. Of course, it is perfectly understandable why they avoid such notions, for the following analyses are pretty hopeless:

x is good $=_{df.}$ S has an obligation to favour x.

x is good $=_{df.}$ S has a duty to favour x.

Obligations and duties are naturally thought of as being within one's voluntary control. But it is obvious that there are goods that one cannot favour at will. Furthermore, one can have an obligation or duty to care about something because one promised to care about it or because one has a role-duty to care about it, e.g., a parent's duty to care a lot about their delinquent off-spring. The object itself may lack value. We'll come back to this so-called 'wrong kind of reason' objection in Section 3.3.

One alternative is to link the relevant notion of fittingness to what *ought to be*. Roughly, the idea is that the good is defined as what it is most fitting to favour, and most fitting to favour is equated with what ought to be.[7] Even if I cannot muster a favouring for a good, it may still be true that it ought to be that I favour this good

One obvious problem here is that the notion of ought-to-be seems in many respects closer to the evaluative than to the deontic. Indeed, it is often called the *ideal* ought, the ought of *desirability*, or, simply, the *evaluative* ought. The ought-to-be notion seems to tick many of the boxes on the intuitive test list for the evaluative: it can be applied to situations and not just actions, failing to comply with an ought-to-be does not entail blameworthiness, and ought-to-be judgements do not settle the question of what is advisable to do, nor do they close deliberation about what to do. Indeed, it is popular to equate what ought to be with what is best (or a necessary condition for being best). If this is true, then an FA-analysis that invoked the ought-to-be would become circular: the good is defined as what it is *best* to favour!

[7] A proposal of this kind is suggested in Zimmerman (2001).

Among contemporary defender of the FA-analysis it is popular to invoke the notion of *reason* instead of the notion of duty, obligation, or ought:

> x is good $=_{df.}$ S has *reason* to favour x.

This account leads directly to the 'wrong kind of reason' objection, for we can have reason to favour what is not good. For example, all sides agree that it would not do to say

> x is good $=_{df.}$ S has *moral reason* to favour x.

since we can have moral reason to favour x because we promised to favour, we have a role-duty to favour, or because favouring has beneficial consequences. I'll talk more about this in Section 3.3. This problem aside, it is not clear that this account will provide a reduction of the evaluative to the deontic. For what do we mean by 'reason'? According to one very popular account, reasons are considerations that *speak in favour* (of actions or attitudes). On this account, if there is a reason for me to favour x, then there are some considerations that speak in favour of me favouring x. The expression 'speaking in favour' is of course very slippery but it should be noted that it lends itself easily to an evaluative reading:

> x speaks in favour of A-ing = rates A-ing a plus= x makes it to some extent *good* to A;
>
> x speaks against A-ing = x rates A-ing a minus = x makes it to some extent *bad* to A.

But, obviously, this reading could not be accepted by an FA-analysist who wants to reduce the evaluative to the deontic.

According to another popular account, reasons are *starting points in reasoning*. But not the starting point in any kind of reasoning, the starting point in *good* reasoning, presumably. But then we again get a circular FA-analysis, since it would in fact define goodness in part in terms of good reasoning.

Of course, I have not shown that reason-talk or ought-talk *must* be understood evaluatively. The point is just that the FA-defender needs to come up with positive arguments against evaluative readings of ought to be or reasons.

3.2 Embracing a Circular Analysis?

As a reply to this circularity threat, Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen have recently suggested that it is best to abandon any reductionist ambitions and instead embrace a circular FA-analysis of value along the lines of:

> *Circular FA:* x is good $=_{df.}$ x has features that make x good and that provide reason for S to favour x.

They argue that this analysis is acceptable despite being circular, for circular analyses of this kind 'still allow us to exhibit structural connections between central concepts (value, reason, pro-attitude). Thereby, they can provide relevant information to those who have the concepts but are not clear about their mutual relationships.'[8]

It is true that this analysis gives us *some* information; it is not utterly trivial like an analysis of the form 'x is F $=_{df.}$ x is F', for 'x is good' will entail 'the features that make x good would provide reason for S to favour x'.

However, even though Circular FA is not utterly trivial, it is clear that much of what makes a philosophical analysis significant is lost. We can no longer say that the defining concepts are *prior* to the target concept, for one cannot grasp the defining concepts (which contain the concept of goodness) without first grasping the target concept of goodness. Nor can we say that we can determine the *extension* of 'x is good' by determining the extension of 'x has features that make x good and which provide S reason to favour x', for in order to determine the extension of the latter expression we need to know the extension of 'x is good'. In Humberstone's words, we have a case of *inferential circularity*.[9] This should make us question whether Circular FA should be seen as a philosophical analysis rather than just an informative conceptual truth.

Another consideration that speaks in favour of treating Circular FA as only an informative conceptual truth is that the only really illuminating conceptual truth is the *left-to-right* conditional:

> If x is good, then x has features that make x good and that provide reason for S to favour x.

The right-to-left conditional:

> If x has features that make x good and that provide reason for S to favour x, then x is good.

is not illuminating, since this is just an instance of the perfectly *general* conceptual truth that, for any x, F, and G, if x has features that make x have F and that provide reason to G x, then x has F. In contrast, the left-to-right implication is not an instance of a perfectly general conceptual truth.

Now, since the illuminating link is only in the left-to-right direction, one can wonder why we should insist that the *whole* biconditional provides an illuminating philosophical analysis. Indeed, one may wonder, quite generally, why a biconditional that is only illuminating in one direction should qualify as a philosophical analysis at all. It seems more plausible to say there is an interesting

[8] Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2006), p. 120.

[9] Humberstone (1997). That Circular FA is inferentially circular is conceded in ibid.

analytical link between the concept of value and the concept of reason to favour and leave it at that.

It should be emphasized that a value primitivist can accept that there is such a link. It is a mistake to think that a primitive concept must be an analytically isolated concept; a primitive concept can have interesting analytical links to other concepts. More precisely, that 'x is F' analytically entails 'x is G' does not show that there must be some non-trivial condition H such that:

x is F $=_{df.}$ x is G and x is H

To take a non-moral example, it is an illuminating conceptual truth that

If x is crimson, then x is red.

But from this it does not follow that crimson is not a primitive notion and that there must be some illuminating analysis of crimson in terms of red.

To take a more philosophically interesting case, it is an illuminating conceptual truth that

If one knows that p, then one believes that p.

But from this it does not follow that knowledge is not a primitive notion and that there must be some illuminating analysis of knowledge in terms of belief. Indeed, primitivists about knowledge, such as Timothy Williamson, would deny that there is such an analysis to be found; they would happily accept that knowledge conceptually entails belief but insist that knowledge is a primitive concept.[10]

Similarly, it is perfectly consistent to be a primitivist about value and still accept that it is a conceptual truth that if x is good, then x has features that make x good which also give S reason to favour x. And she could of course accept similar conceptual truths about badness, neutrality, and betterness: (i) it is a conceptual truth that if x is bad, the x has features that make x bad which also give S reason to disfavor x, (ii) it is a conceptual truth that if x is neutral, then x has features that make x neutral which also give S reason to be neutral towards x, (iii) it is a conceptual truth that if x is better than y, then x and y have features that make x better than y which also give S reason to prefer x to y.

It is this kind of value primitivism I shall argue has all the benefits of the FA-account but none of its drawbacks. However, the conceptual links listed above are only approximately correct and thus in need of some qualifications, some of which I will add in the next section.

[10] See, for instance, Williamson (2000).

3.3 The 'Wrong Kind of Reason' Objection

Even if the FA-analyst succeeds in finding a suitable non-evaluative reading of ought to be or reason, she needs to find a good reply to the 'wrong kind of reason' objection, which we have already touched upon. Roughly put, the objection is that in many cases we have reason to favour something even though it is not good, (or reason to disfavor something even though it is not bad.)

The simplest counterexamples are cases in which the attitude of favouring what is not good *has some beneficial effects*, as in the famous 'Saucer of mud' example, in which a malicious demon will impose a severe punishment unless we desire a saucer of mud.[11]

Other examples involve intrinsically good attitudes whose objects lack intrinsic value. It seems perfectly fine to say that we have reason to take pleasure in neutral things, such as innocent silly games, because the pleasure-taking attitude itself is intrinsically good, even though the objects of this attitude lack intrinsic value.[12]

Another group of cases involve *moral* reasons to favour. For example, one can have strong moral reasons to protect and cherish one's children even though they are unworthy and bad, because parents have a moral duty to do so.[13] Or, we can imagine a case in which I have promised to protect something that lacks value.

Intuitively, the reasons for which we have reason to favour or disfavour things in these examples are of the 'wrong kind', hence the label the 'wrong kind of reason' problem. The reasons are of the wrong kind in that they seem not to have anything to do with the goodness or badness of the object. The challenge is to find a plausible characterization of the 'right kind' of reasons.

This problem has spawned an industry aimed at coming up with proposals. But it is fair to say that all are highly controversial and none of them has gained wide acceptance.[14]

3.4 The Problems with Solitary Goods

In nutshell, the problem of solitary goods is that there are good states of affairs that it is never fitting to favour, because it is logically impossible or unreasonable to favour them, if we understand favouring in any of the following ways:[15]

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[11] Crisp (2000).

[12] See Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004), p. 404.

[13] See, for instance, D'Arms and Jacobson (2000), p. 69.

[14] For some proposed solutions, see, for example, Parfit (2001), Skorupski (2007), Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004), p. 420, Schroeder (2010), and Zimmerman (2011), p. 8.

[15] I discuss this problem much more thoroughly in Bykvist (2009).

> *Factive favourings*. This category comprises all favourings that are factive in the sense that if you favour p, then p is true. Examples are bringing about that p, successfully pursuing p, being glad that p, and taking pleasure in the fact that p.
>
> *Choice-dispositional favourings*. These favourings consist in dispositions to choose. Examples are desires, preferences, and intentions.
>
> *Doxastic favourings*. If you favour p, then you believe that p. Examples are being pleased that p, and being glad that p.

Here is how an FA-analysis who adopts factive attitudes gets into trouble. Suppose that hedonism is true. Then this is a good state of affairs, call it *Solitary Good*:

> there being happy egrets but no (past, present, or future) factive attitudes, agents, or believers.[16]

It cannot be fitting to take a factive attitude towards Solitary Good, since it is impossible to take a factive attitude towards this state of affairs, and it cannot be fitting to do what is logically impossible,

It is possible to have a choice-dispositional attitude towards Solitary Good, but it can hardly be fitting to take such an attitude towards this state of affairs since it is logically impossible to act on this attitude and bring about the state of affair.

It is possible to take a doxastic attitude towards Solitary Good. But it can hardly be fitting to take such an attitude towards the state of affairs since, necessarily, if a person believes that there are happy egrets but no believers, his belief is false. It can hardly be fitting to undermine oneself in this way.

3.5 The 'Distance' Problem

How strongly we should feel about something seems to depend on how 'close' we are to this thing.[17] For example, how strongly we should feel about something seems to depend not just on its value but also on *modal* matters. It does not seem to be fitting to have more intense emotional feelings towards better states of affairs that are only *remote possibilities*. For instance, it does not seem fitting to have a more intense emotional positive feeling towards my daughter's not being abducted by aliens and taken to an intergalactic torture chamber than towards her not suffering the pain of a serious car accident, which could more easily have happened.

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[16] One could argue that this state of affairs is impossible, since egrets are likely to be believers. However, for the argument to work, we only need to assume that there are no believers of propositions about happiness, egrets, past, present, future, factive attitudes, agents, and believers. Even if egrets should count as believers, they are not able to entertain propositions of this kind.

[17] For a discussion of the distance problem, see Bykvist (2009) and Oddie (2005).

How strongly we should react emotionally seems also to depend on *temporal* matters. It seems fitting that the extreme horror we once felt towards some terrible massacre softens with time. Other things being equal, it is not fitting to feel the same intense emotion towards past sufferings that occurred thousands of years back in the past as we do towards some current suffering of the same severity.

The final example has to do with *partiality*. It seems fitting for a parent to feel more strongly about the happiness of their own child than the happiness of a stranger's child, even though these instances of happiness are equally valuable.[18]

In all these cases, the degree to which it is fitting to positively respond to a state of affairs does not correspond to the degree to which it is good. How strongly one should favour an objectively valuable object depends on the 'distance' between oneself and the object.[19] It is, therefore, all too crude to say that it is always fitting to feel more strongly about a better state of affairs or to be emotionally indifferent between states of affairs of the same value.

Value primitivists can happily accept solitary goods without imposing any *ad hoc* restrictions on the link between goodness and fitting attitudes. Freed from the idea that goodness must be defined in terms of fitting attitude, they can endorse a *qualified* link between goodness and fitting attitudes:

> If x is good, then if it is possible to favour x without undermining oneself and also possible to successfully pursue x, then it is fitting to favour x.[20]

The qualification of the link between goodness and fitting attitude is not *ad hoc*, since it is not fitting to favour (in a factive sense) what is impossible to favour, to favour (in a doxastic sense) what will be self-undermining to favour, or to favour (in a choice-dispositional sense) what cannot be successfully pursued.

Note that the FA-analysists cannot just add this qualification to the right-hand side of their definition of goodness. For if they do and define goodness thus

> x is good $=_{df.}$ if it is possible to favour x without undermining oneself and also possible to successfully pursue x, then it is fitting to favour x.

we get the absurd result that all states of affairs that are either (a) not possible to favour, (b) not possible to favour without undermining oneself, or (c) not possible

[18] For a proposed solution to this, see Zimmerman (2011). For a very thorough criticism of the main solutions to the partiality problem, see Sylvan (2021).

[19] This talk about 'distance' should not be taken too literally. I am not assuming that there is a metric of distance. Nor am I assuming that one should *always* care more about things that are closer. The full story is likely to be very complicated.

[20] For simplicity, I will ignore this qualification in the following when I talk about the true link between value and fitting attitudes.

to be successfully pursued are good, for such states of affairs vacuously satisfy the conditional in the definiens.

The value primitivist can easily take into account parental partiality without using *ad hocery*, since she can acknowledge that the fact that *my daughter* is suffering provides a *further* reason to disfavor any instance of my daughter's suffering. This further reason explains why I may have stronger overall reason to prefer an instance of a stranger's suffering to an instance of my daughter's suffering. More generally, the value primitivist can maintain that the overall reason to favour or disfavor x is a function of both the intrinsic value of x and facts about the *modal*, *temporal*, or *personal* 'closeness' to x.[21]

4. What Is So Fitting About the Fitting Attitude Analysis?

4.1 The Only Option for Certain Thick Values of the 'X-able' Form

It is commonly argued that even if the FA-analysis is controversial as a wholesale analysis of all evaluative terms, it *must* be true for value concepts of the '-able' form, such as desirable, admirable, enviable, and preferable, and so on.[22] Each of these value concepts involves an attitude: desiring, admiring, envying, and preferring, respectively. It is then argued that the obvious alternative is to define these concepts in terms of some deontic notion, more specifically, in terms of *reason* or *ought*. The desirable is defined as what we ought to or have reason to desire, the admirable as what we ought to or have reason to admire, and so on.

This argument moves too fast, however. It is right that we must all accept that desirable, admirable and their likes all involve attitudes. What is much more contestable is the claim that we need to appeal to something deontic, such as reasons or ought, rather than something evaluative. It is instructive to see that the standard dictionaries define being desirable, being admirable and its likes not as being something we ought to or have reason to desire, or admire and so on, but as being *worthy* of desire, or admiration. Now, the notion of being worthy is not obviously deontic rather than evaluative. Indeed, being worthy of desire is to have sufficient *worth* to be desired, and being worthy of admiration is to have sufficient worth to be admired. The general pattern here is that being worthy of X is the same as having sufficient worth to be Xed. As far as I have some intuitive grip on the distinction between the deontic and the evaluative, I would put the concept of worth in (or at least closer to) the evaluative category. Of course, it is open to the FA-proponent to go on to define worth in terms of reason or ought. But that is not something we all

[21] This is far from a complete list of objections to the FA-analysis. For some objections to Brentano-style accounts, see Bykvist (2021).

[22] See, for instance, Schroeder (2010).

have to agree on just because we agree that the X-able is worth being Xed. We need a positive argument to be convinced that worth should be analyzed in terms of clear-cut deontic notions such as reason and ought.

4.2 Conceptual Parsimony

Another popular argument for the FA-analysis is that it achieves conceptual parsimony. Instead of having two distinct conceptual categories, the evaluative and the deontic, we can reduce the evaluative to the deontic and only assume one primitive notion.

Even if no one would deny that, *all other things being equal*, we should prefer a more conceptually parsimonious account of value, it is not clear that all other things are equal in the case of the FA-analysis of goodness. Since the FA-analysis is fraught with problems, it is far from clear that it is on the whole preferable to a less conceptually parsimonious account of value. If there is a less parsimonious account – for example, one according to which the evaluative and the deontic are both primitive categories – that can avoid the problems that afflict the FA-analysis and still reap its benefits, then adopting the less parsimonious account seems to be the preferable option.

4.3 Explains Why We Are Justified in our Concern for Valuable Things

It is popular to claim that the FA-analysis explains why we are justified in our concern for valuable things. As Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen claim:

> The virtues of the FA analysis are considerable: it demystifies value and explains why we are justified in our concern for valuable objects. The justification is immediately forthcoming if value is nothing but the existence of reasons for such a concern.[23]

In a similar vein, Danielsson and Olson claim:

> One feature of the Brentano-style approach that we find particularly attractive is that a kind of internalism will be included in the bargain. This will be a kind of internalism that establishes a necessary link between values and attitudes: necessarily, to claim that an object is valuable is to claim that a pro-attitude towards that object is (would be) correct.[24]

To think that this is an advantage of the FA-analysis over value primitivism is to ignore the resources available to the latter theory. As I explained in Section 3.2, a

[23] Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004), p. 400.

[24] Danielsson and Olson (2007), p. 520.

value primitivist view need not deny that there is a necessary link between values and attitudes. They can claim that this is a necessary *conceptual* truth. Even if goodness is primitive it need not be conceptually isolated. It can stand in interesting analytical relations to other concepts, such as the concept of reason to favour.[25]

4.4 Demystifies Value

It has been claimed that the FA-analysis demystifies value by reducing it to something less mysterious: a deontic concept. This is a questionable claim. First, it is not clear why – quite generally – evaluative notions should be seen as more mysterious than deontic concepts. After all, they both fall on the 'value' side of the traditional fact-value divide, where the fact-side seems less mysterious.

Second, it is a mistake to think that demystification requires reduction. You can demystify a concept without analyzing it. You can demystify a primitive concept by pointing out its analytical links to other concepts. A value primitivist who accepts that it is a conceptual truth that we have reason to favour the good seems to have a strong claim to conceptual demystification.

4.5 Buck-Passing: Explains Why Goodness Is Not In Itself Reason-Giving

All sides of the debate agree that there is some kind of link between goodness and reasons. We often have strong reason to promote what is good, and prevent what is bad, for example. One famous argument in favour of the FA-analysis is that it allows for a buck-passing account of this link. The goodness of something does not provide any reasons to favour it (at least no independent reasons). Rather, what it is to be good is to have some other features that provide reasons to favour it.

It is very doubtful whether buck-passing is a great advantage of the FA-analysis. First of all, it is not clear whether the buck can always be passed to something clearly non-evaluative.[26] For example, a good painting can merit appreciation because of the *elegance* and *balance* of its composition. But elegance and balance are thick value notions, and thus not purely descriptive notions.

Second, the value primitivist does not have to say that the *goodness* of an object provides (independent) reason. It is open for her to say that what provide reasons are the features that make the object good. If these features are themselves non-evaluative, the buck is ultimately passed to something non-evaluative. Indeed, the

[25] Reisner (2009) questions whether the FA-analysis really has the advantage of *explaining* why we are justified in our concern for valuable objects. If the FA-analysis provides a *definition* of the goodness *concept* in terms of being justified in caring about what is good, it is unclear whether we automatically have an explanation of this justification. In general, it seems odd to say that the definiens explains the definiendum. To take a non-evaluative example, it is odd to explain that someone is a bachelor by pointing out that he is an unmarried man.

[26] Crisp (2005).

value primitivist can even say that it is a *conceptual* truth that the features that make an object good provide some reason to favour it. Remember that the value primitivist can accept that it is a necessary conceptual truth that if x is good, then x has some features that make x good which also provide some reason to favour x. On this view, it is not the goodness of an item that provides the reasons to favour it but its good-making features. That the item is good *conceptually entails* that it has good-making features which also provide reasons to favour.

Even if the value primitivist can avoid the charge of treating goodness itself as reason-providing, it has been accused of making value *redundant*. If what provide the reason to favour an item are its non-evaluative features, it seems redundant to postulate a primitive notion of goodness. Why not just say that to be good *is* just to have features that provide reason to favour?

One obvious reason why we should balk at this strong identification of goodness with the property of having reason-giving features is the list of problems presented in Section 3 (e.g., the problem of solitary goods and the 'wrong kind of reason' problem), it seems unlikely that we can find an illuminating non-circular analysis of goodness. If this is right, then it is not redundant to postulate a primitive notion of goodness; it is indispensable.

4.6 Explains the Plurality and Incomparability of Values and Also What Unites All Values

It has been argued that the FA-analysis has an easy time explaining the plurality and incomparability of value without giving up on a unifying account of goodness. By 'plurality of value' is meant the idea that 'different goods are properly valued in different ways'.[27] For example, virtuous acts call for admiration and pleasant experiences for rejoice. Incomparability is expected to occur when two items differ radically in what kind of responses is called for. For example, since it does not seem possible to always compare the degrees of admiration to the degrees of rejoice, it is to be expected that some virtuous acts cannot be compared in value to some pleasant experiences. The FA-analysis could then say that what unifies all *good* things is that it is fitting to have some kind of *pro*-attitude towards them, and what unifies all *bad* things is that it is fitting to have some kind of *con*-attitude towards them.

These considerations do not univocally speak in favour of the FA-analysis, however. Starting with the point about unification, one could wonder what makes all the pro-attitudes 'pro' and all the con-attitudes 'con'. An FA-analysist with reductionist ambitions cannot say that an attitude is 'pro', if it is a fitting response to a positive value, and 'con', if it is a fitting attitude to a negative value. Nor can she say that an attitude is 'pro', if it involves a positive value judgement, and 'con',

[27] Anderson (1993), p. 10.

if it involves a negative value judgement. Note that a value primitivist could happily embrace any of these accounts.

It is also tricky to define pro-attitudes and con-attitudes in terms of some specific phenomenological feel, such as pleasure and displeasure, respectively. If we do, it is not clear that we can maintain the idea that different goods can call for radically different responses, not all involving pleasure or displeasure. Furthermore, it does not seem right to say that a higher degree of a pro-attitude always comes with a higher degree of some phenomenological feel. For example, it is doubtful that a higher degree of admiration always comes with a greater intensity of felt pleasure.

What about the plurality of values? The value primitivist could explain how different values are properly valued in different ways by simply stating that it is a necessary conceptual truth that if x is good in a certain sense or way, then this sense or way of value also determines what kind of response to x that is adequate. For example, if the sense of goodness has to do with the achievements and strengths of a person, then the proper response to a person who exemplifies this value will be admiration. Or, if we are talking about personal goodness, in Rønnow-Rasmussen's sense, then if x has this value for a person, then the proper response has to be *for the sake of her*.[28]

What about incomparability? The FA-analysis explains value incomparability in terms of incomparability of attitudinal strength. Can the value primitivist provide an alternative explanation of value incomparability? Well, nothing prevents the value primitivist from distinguishing different kinds of value: better *as an achievement*, better *as a pleasure*, better as *an artist*, better *as a philosopher*. She does not have to think that there must be some 'covering value' according to which the pleasure and the achievement can be compared. Obviously, they cannot be compared under the value as pleasures or the value as achievements.[29]

5. Concluding Remarks

I have argued that the best version of value primitivism accepts that there are important analytical links between goodness and fitting attitudes. More exactly, if x is good and we can reasonably favour x – that is, favour it successfully without undermining ourselves – then we have some reason to favour x. How strong this reason is may depend on other factors, such as the 'distance' – modal, temporal, or

[28] Rønnow-Rasmussen (2011), p. 46, (2021), p. 131.

[29] It has also been argued that an FA-analysis can provide a plausible account of *parity*. See, for instance, Rabinowicz (2008) and Gert (2004). I think that parity can be explained well without presupposing an FA-analysis, but space constraints prevent me from elaborating on this point. I have a discussion of this point in a longer version of this paper.

personal – between the favourer and x. I have also argued that this form of value primitivism can avoid the standard objections to the FA-account.

This form of value primitivism has all the important virtues that have been ascribed to the FA-account. It is true that an FA-account that reduces the evaluative to the deontic is more conceptually parsimonious, assuming that we are not going for a value-first approach. However, since the FA-account is fraught with serious problems that value primitivism can solve or sidestep, value primitivism seems on the whole to be the superior alternative.[30]

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