

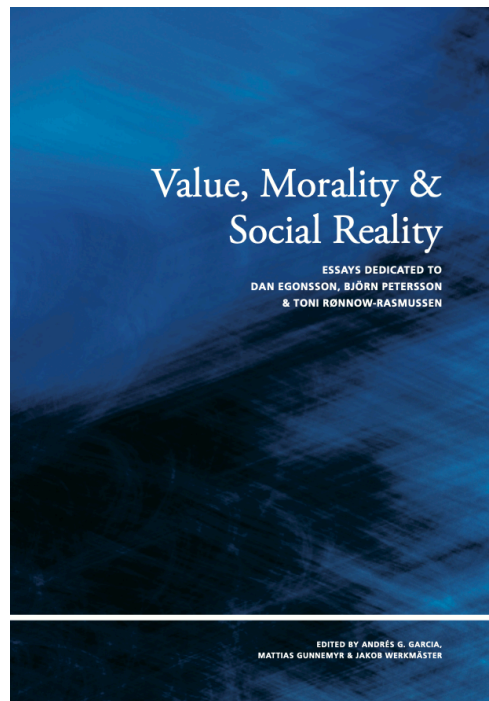
Love, Blame, and What We are Owed

Understanding Relational Values

Jakob Werkmäster

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1. Introduction

In several of his works, Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen has made the case for distinguishing between personal value and impersonal value (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2009; 2011; 2022). In Rønnow-Rasmussian fashion the aim of this paper is to make a further distinction in value, that between relational value and non-relational value. My goal is to argue that not only are these value concepts distinct from the distinction between impersonal value and personal value; they are orthogonal to one another. As I show in the paper, I believe that some of the most important values in our everyday life, such as lovable and blameworthiness, are best understood as relational values.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In this first introductory section, I present the Fitting Attitudes Analysis of Value (henceforth FA) and how Rønnow-Rasmussen makes use of it to distinguish between personal- and impersonal value. In the second section, I show that FA offers conceptual space for another distinction in value, modifying for whom an attitude is fitting. I stipulate that we call this a distinction between relational values and non-relational values and present an initial characterization. In the third and fourth sections, I show how the distinction between relational value and non-relational value resonates with our everyday evaluative thinking and is philosophically illuminating when it comes to discussions about morality and directed moral obligations. In doing so I also conclude that our initial characterization is inadequate. Just focusing on for whom an attitude is fitting is inadequate. It fails to capture vital aspects of the phenomenon we are after, collapses into the controversial distinction between agent-relative and agent-neutral value, and inherits the problems facing said distinction. A second improved

characterization is given that not only focuses on *for whom* an attitude is fitting, but also on which attitude is fitting. This characterization is found more satisfactory albeit not without its own set of challenges.

According to FA, to be valuable is to be the fitting target of a valenced attitude. To be good is to be the fitting target of a pro-attitude and to be bad is to be the fitting target of a con-attitude. This pattern of analysis goes back to Brentano (1889/2009) and Ewing (1948), and has had a renaissance in contemporary philosophy following Scanlon (1998) but also in large part due to the contribution of Rønnow-Rasmussen and Rabinowicz (2004). FA consists of two components, a normative component (i.e., the ‘fittingness’) and an attitudinal component (i.e., the ‘pro/con-attitude’). On FA, to be lovable is to be the fitting object of love, admirable the fitting target of admiration, blameworthy to be the fitting object of blame and so on. There are several ways to understand what is meant by ‘fitting’. In line with the wider reasons-first ideology and Rønnow-Rasmussen’s writings, I follow suit and understand fittingness in terms of reasons.¹

Rønnow-Rasmussen (2011) aims to make sense of how certain objects can have value for someone, the two examples he uses are a poem written by his daughter when she was a child and remnants of a bookcase his father made for him. These objects, he argues, are for good for Rønnow-Rasmussen. They have a personal value for Rønnow-Rasmussen. Whether they also have an impersonal (final) value is a different question. Rønnow-Rasmussen shows how we can distinguish between two fundamentally different kinds of values, impersonal value and personal value, by utilizing the attitudinal component of FA to make sense of personal- and impersonal values. For an object to have impersonal value is for it to be fitting to favor it, but for an object to be good for *a* is for it to be fitting to favor the object *x* *for a’s sake* (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2011). Whether it is personally or impersonally valuable is therefore made evident by the attitudinal part of FA, by the way it is fitting to favor it – with an eye to for whom’s sake one should favor it.

Rønnow-Rasmussen argues that the fact that an object has personal value does not entail that it has impersonal value and that something has impersonal value does not entail that it has personal value. The two are distinct and non-reducible. One and the same object can, however, be both personally- and impersonally valuable. This allows Rønnow-Rasmussen to explain how his daughter’s poem can be good *for* him, without having to commit himself to the claim that his daughter’s poem has impersonal value. It is fitting for Rønnow-Rasmussen to favor the poem for *his sake* – further it is fitting for *anyone* to favor the poem for *his* sake. Personal values are genuine values and not just subjective ascriptions about what Rønnow-Rasmussen

¹ Reasons-first is the claim that normative reasons are the metaphysical rock-bottom of normativity and all other normative properties can be understood in terms of reasons (Rowland, 2019). Space does not allow me to argue for reasons first, or at least that FA should be understood in terms of reasons. For the purposes of the paper, I think the position is reasonable and popular enough that I can simply have it as a presupposition of the paper.

likes. Some objects can be *good for A* even if A does not know about them, or even dislike them.²

The vital aspect of Rønnow-Rasmussen approach is that it is solely the attitudinal aspect of FA that is modified to accommodate for personal value. It is from “for whom’s sake” it is fitting to have the attitude that determines whether for whom an object is a personal value, and whether it is a personal value. There is one aspect of the normative component of the FA analysis, the fittingness, that seldom gets discussed – for whom does it need to be fitting? The beginning of an answer to this question is the focus of the following section.

2. Fitting for Whom?

As FA is usually formulated the agential component, ‘for whom’ it needs to be fitting, is omitted all together. It was omitted in the previous section. Most remain satisfied with the claim that it is “fitting to favor an object”. It is likely that the agent(s) for whom it needs be fitting is omitted in formulations of FA because *who* is fittingly favoring intuitively does not matter. Intuitively, if *x* is admirable it is fitting for anyone to admire *x*. Likewise, in so far as something is an increase in welfare it seems that it is fitting for anyone, or everyone, to favor it.³ However, given what Rønnow-Rasmussen calls the “personalizability of reasons”, all reasons are reasons *for someone* and if an attitude is fitting, the attitude is fitting *for someone* (2009).⁴ Given that formulations of FA usually omit for whom it needs be fitting it requires a bit of speculation what philosophers have in mind. To my knowledge, when it is not omitted, it is expressed in terms of ‘everyone’ or ‘anyone’; see for instance (McHugh & Way, 2016; Orsi, 2015; Rabinowicz, 2013; Rowland, 2019; Schroeder, 2010).

By twisting the gears in the machination of FA we can distinguish personal values from impersonal values by tinkering with the attitudinal gears of FA, whether we

² For Rønnow-Rasmussen, it is important that *good-for* is not equivalent with *welfare*, welfare might always be *good for someone* but not everything that is *good for someone* has to do with welfare. For our present purposes, we need not linger on this issue. For other accounts about personal value see (Darwall, 2002; Rosati, 2008).

³ A small caveat. Some argue that there is an epistemic constraint on fittingly favoring an object (Bykvist, 2009), i.e., it is not fitting for someone who has never contemplated the welfare increase or knows about the welfare increase to favor it – but in principle as long as the salient considerations are available to the agent it is fitting for anyone to favor a just outcome or an increase in welfare.

⁴ It is possible that if one rather than understanding fittingness in terms of reasons one takes fittingness as basic, there is no need for an agential component at all. Admiration just fits the object, without any reference to an agential component. In other words, it has been suggested to me that it is possible that while there is a “personalizability of reasons” there might not be a “personalizability of fittingness”. Thanks to Thomas Schmidt and Andrés Garcia for suggesting reasoning along these lines.

should favor an object *for someone's sake* or not. Similarly, by tinkering with the attitudinal component of FA we can get at a distinction between final/instrumental value, by looking at valence of the attitude we can determine whether an object is good or bad, by looking at the specific type of attitude we can determine whether something is loveable or admirable and so on.⁵

As a matter of intellectual curiosity what happens if we rather than tinkering with the attitudinal component, we tinker with the agential component of FA? Tinker with for *whom* an attitude is fitting! Some objects are such that it is only fitting for some to favor it, other objects are such that it is fitting for anyone to favor it. Undoubtedly, there is conceptual space for such a maneuver. I stipulate that objects that it is fitting for anyone to favor, pace eventual epistemic constraints, have what we can call a non-relational value and objects where it is '*fitting for some but not all*' have a relational value.

FA-NR1: *x* is non-relationally valuable if and only if, and because, it is fitting for *anyone* to favor *x*.⁶

FA-R1: *x* is valuable in relation to A if and only if, and because, it is fitting for A but not necessarily anyone else to favor *x*.

Conceptual possibility, however, in a way comes cheap. In order to be philosophically interesting, not only does one need to prove conceptual possibility but also explain what it means; whether the distinction is actually instantiated in the world, and that the distinction is robust and does not collapse into previously made distinctions. The goal for the next sections is to show that the distinction between relational values and non-relational values is feasible, that there are plausible examples of both present in both our everyday thinking about values and our philosophical theorizing. In doing so, however, I also show that our first characterization is inadequate. Our first characterization collapses into the distinction between agent-relative and agent-neutral values and fails to fully capture the inter-personal relational aspects of the phenomenon we are trying to capture.

⁵ Final goodness as that which we should favor for its own sake. Instrumental goodness as that we should favor for the sake of its effects. An object is good rather than bad if it is fitting to favor it rather than disfavor it. An object is, say, very admirable if it is fitting to admire it a lot. An object is admirable rather than despicable if it is fitting to admire it rather than despise it.

⁶ Some might argue that non-relational values, objects where it is fitting for *anyone* to favor, is just a special case of a relational value but that it has this value in relation to any possible agent. I do not want to argue about terms and labels. There is a philosophical interesting difference between objects in which it is only fitting for some to favor it and objects in which it is fitting for anyone to favor it. The latter object's value is in no way explained by or dependent on the agent(s) or properties of the agent(s) who would be doing the favoring. For more on this see footnote 7.

3. Love, Blame, and What We Owe to Each Other

The purpose of this section is to give substantive intuitive examples of objects where it is fitting for some but not just anyone to have an attitude, and that this affects what kind of value these objects have. Examples where we want to say that the object has value even though it is not fitting for anyone (but to some) to have a pro-attitude towards it.

3.1 Love

To give an intuitive example of the distinction between relational and non-relational value consider the following (true) claim: “My parents are very loveable.” This claim can be analyzed in different ways. One way is that it is fitting for anyone to love them for their own sake. Highlighting my parent’s final value. Another way to analyze this claim is that it is fitting to love them *for my sake*. Thereby highlighting the personal value my parents have for me. There, however, seems to be a third possible interpretation. It is fitting *for me* to love my parents in a sense in which it is not fitting for others to do. They have, I want to argue, a value in relation to me.⁷ This highly personal aspect of an intuitive sense of love is not able to be captured only by appeal to a distinction between personal- and impersonal value.

Given the qualities of my parents, I believe that all three ways of analyzing the claim can be true. Note also that in the third relational sense of loveable, it is possible that it is fitting *for me* to love them *for my sake* or for their own sake. It is therefore, at least conceptually, possible to have relational personal value or relational impersonal value. In other words, the distinction between personal/impersonal value and the distinction between relational/non-relational value are orthogonal. This should perhaps not come as a surprise since we get the distinction between personal/impersonal value by looking at the attitudinal component and relational/non-relational value by looking at the agential component.

Getting into the details of the nature of love and the value of lovability would take us too far astray.⁸ Safe to say, what I have in mind is a narrow sense of love. There is a sense of love, in which love is more like liking. Then there is another sense of love including romantic love and familial love that I hope the reader is intimately familiar with. It, however, would be impertinent if I failed to mention Rønnow-Rasmussen’s (2008) writing on the subject. Rønnow-Rasmussen (2008) discusses the possibility that the object of love is not the properties of the beloved but the

⁷ That some of what makes them valuable in relation to me is the relationship I stand to them entails, I think, that all relational values by necessity will be extrinsic rather than intrinsic values.

⁸ For some classical writings about the nature of love, see (Frankfurt, 2001; Howard, 2019; Kolodny, 2003; Plato, transl. 1998). For a new interesting view on the nature of love, see Werkmäster Johansson (MS).

particular person. The beloved is non-fungible and it would not be fitting to love an identical copy with the same properties.⁹ The properties of the beloved might be what causes us to love them but, according to Rønnow-Rasmussen, is not the object of love. Rønnow-Rasmussen's insightful writing of love as a value is thought provoking. There is one section in his paper that could be interpreted as endorsing that the beloved, over and above having impersonal and personal value, also has a relational value. One of the insights is that regardless of whether there is a sense in which one can be lovable in a way in which ascribes impersonal value there is at least one additional sense. He writes:

Instead of talking about value period, it might seem more plausible to ascribe *agent-relative value-for to the beloved*. I suspect that many who would be hesitant to say that their beloved carried a final value period would at least be ready to say promptly that *the beloved is good for or has value for them* (people are probably not ready to say to the same extent that their beloved has some final value period that nobody else has)." (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2008, p. 502 emphasis added).

In interpreting what Rønnow-Rasmussen is saying here, there is a slight tension. On the one hand, he is claiming that the beloved is *good-for* the agent. On the other hand, he seems to claim that the beloved has *agent-relative* value. In *Personal Value* (2011) it is made clear that good for is not an agent-relative value in the traditional sense; it is fitting for anyone to love my parents *for my sake*; Rønnow-Rasmussen's daughter's poem is not good-relative to Rønnow-Rasmussen, but good *for* Rønnow-Rasmussen.¹⁰ Perhaps the most natural way to interpret (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2008) here is that the paper on love is an earlier work and the terminology of agent-relative is something that disappeared as the work matured.

An alternative interpretation is that there is the possibility that Rønnow-Rasmussen oscillates between personal value and relational value. The leading example in his 2008 paper is Rønnow-Rasmussen's love for his wife Ellie. In his writing, it seems to be implicitly taken for granted that Rønnow-Rasmussen has reason to love his wife that we lack, or reasons to love her in a way in which we lack.¹¹ Not a love that we could have reason to have towards Ellie for Rønnow-Rasmussen's sake, but a different kind of love. Just as with the example of my parents and familial love, Rønnow-Rasmussen's example of romantic love seems to highlight the same structure. It is without a doubt the case that there is a sense of love in which we have reasons to love Rønnow-Rasmussen's beloved for his sake. Ellie is good for Rønnow-Rasmussen. Over and above, being good for him, what I

⁹ For more on objections against what is usually called the "Qualitative view" of love see (Howard, 2019; Kolodny, 2003).

¹⁰ For a discussion about agent-relative values, see section four.

¹¹ This is not, I think, an example of what Rønnow-Rasmussen (2011) calls "Janus-Values", values where it is not fitting for, say, the admirable to admire herself on pain of undermining her admirability, but fitting for others to admire her (for a's sake).

want to argue, which is something I believe is already implicitly acknowledged in his writing, is that his beloved has a value in relation to him.

This should not be read as a form of subjectivism. It is not a claim about Rønnow-Rasmussen's desire or a report of his preferences or beliefs. Such a reductive claim would not capture the very real way in which my parents are valuable in relation to me, regardless of my desires or motivational states.¹²

It is just that some of the reasons to love my parents are grounded in not just properties about them but also in properties about our relationship, which are such that I am in a unique position to have such a reason to love them. This, however, is not to say that all relational values are such that it is only ever fitting for a single agent to have some attitude. We can easily imagine where several agents stand in some relation to something such that it is fitting for a group or several individual agents to have some attitudes, but not fitting for just anyone.

3.2 Blame and Directed Duties

Moving on from love to blame. Blameworthiness is one of the more central values within our moral practices.

On FA to be blameworthy is to be the fitting target of blame. There is a conceptual connection between blameworthiness and moral wrongdoing. Lastly, and perhaps trivially, there is a conceptual connection between moral wrongdoing and moral obligations.

This has led some philosophers to argue for a buck-passing account of moral wrongdoing and moral obligations (c.f., Darwall, 2006; Skorupski, 2010).¹³

Wrongness-BP: An act F is morally wrong if and only if it is fitting to blame an agent for Fing (I.e. the agent is blameworthy for Fing).¹⁴

Given the following intuitive and trivial principle

OB-W: An act F is morally obligatory if and only if not-Fing is morally wrong (forbidden).

We get the following buck-passing account of duties.

¹² This is not to say that it is incompatible with subjectivism. It is. Subjectivism is not entailed, or presupposed, by anything I say.

¹³ Why not pass the buck directly from moral obligations to reasons for actions, such as an act is morally obligatory if and only if it is what one has most reason to do? The answer to this is that such an account is unable to account for supererogation (Werkmäster, 2019).

¹⁴ Wrongness-BP is a controversial thesis. Space does allow me to investigate the advantages or disadvantages of Wrongness-BP as such. While I believe there are many merits to it, for our present purposes, it is not important whether it is correct or not.

OB-BP: An act F is morally obligatory if and only if it is fitting to blame an agent that does not F (i.e., F is morally obligatory if the agent would be blameworthy if she failed to F.).

One thing about moral obligations, is that some are directed, owed to others, while others are not directed, owed to no one in particular. When I make a promise to you, I have an obligation to you. If I fail to fulfill my promise without a proper excuse, not only do I do something wrong, you are *wronged* by me. Say that I promise you to give my friend a gift. If I fail to fulfill the promise, my friend is not wronged, you are. Keeping my promise is owed to you even if someone else is the benefactor. This directed character of certain duties is importantly different from other duties we might have such as a duty to not destroy some piece of art or an untouched forest. Scanlon (2008), Darwall (2006), and Wallace (2019) are a few of the philosophers that have recently been attracted to understanding morality via a focus on our relationships and to the nature of morality as an essentially interpersonal phenomenon. In short, all moral duties are directed duties.

While the first order questions in virtue of what some duties are directed, owed to others, our present purposes are with the structural issue. An undirected duty can be construed as a two-placed relation between an agent and an action. A directed duty on the other hand rather takes the form of a three-placed relation between an agent, an action, and the party who stands to be wronged. If our deontic buck-passing account, our FA analysis of duties and wrongness in terms of blameworthiness is to be correct, it should be able to account for the difference between directed and non-directed duties. This difference should be reflected in the BPA analysis of duties and wrongness in terms of blameworthiness.

A first attempt is that we can do so by distinguishing *for whom* it is fitting to blame agents that flout directed duties and non-directed duties.

Wronged: A wrongs B by Fing if and only if it is fitting for B to blame A in a sense in which it is not fitting for anyone else to blame A for Fing.

Wrong: A's Fing is wrong if and only if it is fitting for anyone to blame A for Fing.¹⁵

Some, such as Darwall (2006), might argue that even if A wrongs B it is possible for a third party to not just blame A, but to blame A on behalf of B. I argue, however, that blaming on behalf of someone does not capture the sense in which the wronged party can blame the wrongdoer. Blaming on behalf of B, rather seems to be to blame

¹⁵ What is the relation between doing something morally wrong and wronging someone? Arguably, to wrong someone implies that one does something morally wrong, but not the other way around. If so, whenever A wrongs B it is fitting for anyone to blame A since A also does something that is just wrong. Not only is this a possible implication, it sounds quite plausible. Morality is not a private matter, albeit often a relational one. It is wrong to wrong someone. This, however, does not diminish that the wronged party can fittingly blame the wrongdoer in a sense not available to others.

A for *B*'s sake.¹⁶ This, however, would entail that A is blameworthy *for* B (personal blameworthiness rather than relational blameworthiness). I leave it open whether there is both impersonal- and personal blameworthiness. Nothing that I say speaks against this possibility. The possibility, however, in no way tells against the existence of relational blameworthiness.

There is furthermore, a limit to extent one can hold a wrongdoer responsible on behalf of the wronged. A third-party can for instance not forgive nor accept an apology on behalf of the wronged. By accepting the idea that there is such a thing as relational blameworthiness, we get the tools to provide a straightforward explanation of why it is the wronged who is owed an apology and why there is a sense in which it is only the wronged party who can grant forgiveness.

4. Am I Just Re-inventing Agent-relative Values?

So far, I have argued that relational values are not to be conflated with personal values. I have given substantive examples of values I think are better captured by appealing to the distinction between relational- and non-relational values. So far so good, one question that the reader might have been thinking throughout this paper is, however, the following: "Isn't he just re-inventing the distinction between agent-relative- and agent-neutral values?"

In this section, I argue that relational values are not to be conflated with agent-relative values.¹⁷

In order to arbitrate whether the distinction between relational values and non-relational values collapses into the distinction between agent-relative and agent-neutral values we first need a clear definition of agent-relative values. What does it mean for something to be good-relative-to? Sadly, there is no uncontroversial way to express the distinction between agent-relative value and agent-neutral value, or if a distinction even in principle could be made.

The motivation for philosophers who want to argue for a distinction between agent-relative- and agent-neutral values has often been to find a way to allow consequentialists to implement side-constraints in their moral theories. In other

¹⁶ Rather than blaming on behalf, the locution of blaming as a representative of the moral community is sometimes used. If the moral community was wronged it makes sense that as far as A is blameworthy in relation to the moral community that any member of the moral community could relationally blame A. The metaphysics of whether groups, such as the moral community, could be owed directed duties is something I leave open for debate. What matters is that there is a difference between blaming on behalf of someone and blaming as a proper representative of someone. A man could fittingly blame sexist hiring practices on behalf of women, but not as a representative of women.

¹⁷ However, note that I am not proposing the distinction between relational value and non-relational value as an alternative to agent-relative and agent-neutral value; it is possible that both exist even if I am skeptical of the distinction between agent-relative and agent-neutral value.

words, an explanation for why it is not the case that I have a moral obligation to murder one in order to prevent someone else murdering two, even though on pure consequentialist grounds murdering one maximizes value.¹⁸ The distinction between agent-relative- and agent-neutral promises to deliver on this. It allows the consequentialist to say that while murdering one might be neutrally better than allowing two others to be murdered, it is better relative to you that you do not murder rather than someone else murdering. If one is supposed to maximize agent-relative value then the consequentialist can explain deontic side-constraints.

Some have tried to capture the agent-relative value and agent-neutral value distinction (Portmore, 2007) by utilizing FA. In fact, Schroeder (2007: 292) has proposed a characterization of the distinction by modifying the agential component of FA in a very similar way in which I have characterized relational value. According to Schroeder, an object is good-relative-to-A when it is only fitting for A to favor the object and an object is agent-neutrally good when it is fitting for everyone (or anyone) to favor the object.¹⁹

As Schroeder (2007) has shown, however, there is a devastating objection against this characterization. At least if one wants to use agent-relative value to argue for deontic side-constraints.

On Schroeder's characterization of agent-relative- and agent-neutral value the following is true:

X is neutrally-better than *y* if and only if it is fitting for anyone to favor *x* more than they favor *y*.

However if we assume that *x* is [A murdering one to avoid someone else murdering two], and *y* is [A not murdering one and someone else murdering two]. In such a case, *ex hypothesi* *y* is better-relative-to-A than *x*.

Y is better-relative-to-A if and only if it is fitting for A to favor *y* more than A favors *y*.

¹⁸ Sen (1983) is said to be among the first to discuss agent-relative value. For a good overview of the discussion see Schroeder (2021).

¹⁹ Some have tried to capture the agent-relative value and agent-neutral value distinction by appealing to the distinction with agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons. However, unless we have a better grasp of what this distinction is it will not illuminate the distinction between agent-relative value and agent-neutral value. For attempts on how to draw this distinction, see (Bykvist, 2012; Nagel, 1970; Parfit 1984; Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2009; Skorupski, 2010). It is of little concern to us if it is possible to draw a tenable distinction between agent-relative reasons and agent-neutral reasons, say, by appeal to a non-reducible free agent-variable. If such a distinction is feasible then relational values are plausible concerned with agent-neutral reasons rather than agent-relative reasons. Anyone would have reason to love my parents if they stood in the same relationship to my parents as I do. In this sense, the reason I am concerned with are more similar to the (agent-neutral) reason you have when you are the only available agent that can save a drowning child than with agent-relative reasons.

Given (1) that “agent A is a part of the set of ‘anyone’” and (2) that “agent A should favor y more than x ” it comes out as false (3) that “ x is neutrally-better than y ”. In other words, we get inconsistent rankings, because we assumed at the start that murdering one to stop someone else murdering two was neutrally better than not murdering one and letting two die. The only thing that is every agent-neutrally better is that which is better-relative-to-any-agent. (Schroeder, 2007).

If I am merely re-inventing the wheel and the distinction between relational- and non-relational values collapses into the distinction between agent-relative/neutral value we are in deep trouble for two reasons. First, this paper would be superfluous. Secondly, Schroeder’s detrimental objection would apply in force. Luckily, I believe that what we need to do is quite straightforward. Over and above tinkering with *for whom* an attitude is fitting we also need to look at the attitudinal component to get a proper characterization of relational- and non-relational values. In other words, the first stab at capturing the distinction by merely tinkering with the agential component is mistaken.

That my parents are loveable in relation to me does not mean that it is fitting for me to love them *more* than someone else. That I am blameworthy in relation to you does not mean that you should blame me *more* than you should blame someone else that does something wrong (but does not wrong you). It is a qualitative difference rather than a quantitative one. My love towards my parents is different from my love towards someone that is non-relationally valuable. The wronged’s blame is different from, say, a third-party’s blame. This could perhaps be cashed out in terms of Strawson’s (1962) distinction that it is fitting for the victim feel resentment, third-parties to feel indignation, and the perpetrator to feel guilty. I, however, feel no need to commit to one way or the other on the validity of Strawson’s observations. This way, we avoid inconsistent rankings. In order to have something to work with let us make a second stab at characterizing the distinction between relational- and non-relational values. We only need a slight modification, replace ‘favor’ with ‘favor*’. Favor* with an asterisk is a placeholder for the specific relational attitude we have in mind.

FA-R2: x is valuable in relation to A if and only if, and because, it is fitting for A but not necessarily anyone else to *favor** x .

This second attempt is not only able to side-step Schroeder’s objection against agent-relative values – it allows us to explain why some comparisons are hard and should remain hard.²⁰

That it is fitting for A to blame* B does not entail that it is fitting for A to (non-relationally) blame B more than anyone else. The attitude of blame* and blame pick

²⁰ I am here using ‘hard’ in a technical sense to imply that we do not want to say that the objects being compared are equally as good nor one better than the other and that it is not obvious that improvements of one object would change how the objects compare.

out two different values. So even if B is blameworthy* in relation to A, it is possible that it is fitting for anyone (including A) to blame C more than B.

Some common comparisons are hard, take for instance “Is it fitting that I love my parents more than Nelson Mandela?”, “Would it be fitting to love my wife more than my son?”, and “Would it be fitting to love my first child more than my second child?”

Our answer to the first question is that, in the relational sense of love* it is fitting that I love my parents more than I love* Nelson Mandela. Given my lack of relationship to Mandela, it is not fitting for me to love* Mandela at all. In the non-relational sense, despite how great my parents might be, it is probably fitting for me to love Mandela more than my parents. We can here see how we are able to deal with Schroeder’s objection. Mandela is more lovable than my parents. It is fitting for anyone to love him more than my parents. This does not conflict with the fact that my parents are more lovable* in relation to me than Mandela. As I said, it is fitting for me to love* my parents more than I love* Mandela.

Our answer to the second question might perhaps take things a step too far and I am unsure whether we should take that step. However, arguably the sense of familial love I have towards my son is qualitatively different from the romantic sense of love I have towards my wife. They denote two different relational values. Once we have distinguished between romantic love and familial love as two different attitudes, a lot of the anxiety behind the question disappears. Maybe there is a wider covering concept of love in which they are comparable, but maybe such a wider concept of love would lose what is perhaps most important to us when it comes to these kinds of attitudes and values, their inherent relational and personal nature.

Answering the last question “Would it be fitting to love my first child more than my second child?” is also hard. Here we cannot dissolve the hardness of the question by an appeal to a distinction between familial love and romantic love. If we want to take the same route in explaining the hardness of the comparison, we would have to claim that love-towards-my-child-A and love-towards-my-child-B are distinct enough attitudes as to be classified as different attitudes and the children having particular different values in relation to me. This would entail an explosion in different kinds of values and attitudes.²¹ I am skeptical. On the other hand, the grounds of relational values are very peculiar and particular, so why is it unreasonable to think that the attitudes are also very peculiar and particular? I leave the project of answering and explicating the difference between love and love* for another paper. In the case of blame and blame*, I believe that the Strawsonian observation on distinguishing resentment, guilt and indignation goes some of the way in providing such a story.

²¹ Another hard question that invites similar issues would be “Is it fitting for me to love my child more than you love your child?”

5. Conclusion

Philosophers often strive for universality, understanding universal values of justice, fairness and so on. Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen has showed that the analytic philosopher need not (indeed should not) shy away from the personal to understand the values in our world. With this, I hope to have shown that it is open for analytic philosophers to take relations serious and acknowledge the relational aspect inherent in some of the values most important in our everyday lives and our lives as philosophers.²²

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