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### *Value: Fitting-Attitude Account of*

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According to an influential tradition in value analysis, *to be valuable is to be a fitting object of a pro-attitude* – a fitting object of favoring. If it is fitting to favor an object for its own sake, then, on this view, the object has final value. If it is fitting to favor an object for the sake of its effects, then its value is instrumental. *Disvalue* is connected in the analogous way to disfavoring, i.e. to con-attitudes. For a history of this *fitting-attitudes analysis*, or *FA-analysis* for short, see below. The label itself was coined rather recently, though, in Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004).

Apart from the suggested conceptual linkage between value and attitudes, what's distinctive for this approach is that it treats deontic concepts as prior to the axiological ones: Value is explicated in terms of the stance that *ought* to be taken towards the object. That it is fitting to have a pro-attitude, that there are reasons to have it, or that the attitude in question is appropriate, required or called for, are different ways of expressing the deontic component in FA-analysis. On some versions, FA-approach is meant to be a meaning analysis of “valuable” or “good”; on other versions it is rather a real definition: an account of what value or goodness consists in.

It's often left unspecified who are the subjects of the deontic requirement, with the implication being that the requirement applies to anyone. Some versions of the analysis restrict the scope of 'ought' to those who are familiar with the object under consideration (Broad 1930) or to subjects who are 'like us' (Wiggins 1987).

FA-format can also be applied to various concepts of relative value. Thus, an object *x* can be said to be *valuable for P* if it is fitting to favor *x* for *P*'s sake (Darwall 2004, Rønnow-Rasmussen 2007). Value-for in this sense should be distinguished from value-relative-to: *x* is *valuable relative to P* if it is fitting for *P* (but not necessarily for others) to favor *x*. (For some difficulties with this suggestion, see Schroeder

2007.) It is unclear whether FA-analysis can also be used to deal with the *attributive* uses of 'valuable' and 'good', as in "this is a good watch". (For a positive answer, cf. Rawls' proposal below; for criticism, see Brännmark 2008.)

One of the advantages of FA-analysis is that it to some extent *demystifies* values (Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004). It makes their normative authority unproblematic and thereby solves the problem that was especially troublesome for G.E. Moore's treatment of value as a primitive concept. Moore was taken to task on this very issue by William Frankena (1942) and more recently by Stephen Darwall (2003). On FA-account, on the other hand, there is no mystery in values being "intrinsically prescriptive," to use Mackie's terminology (Mackie 1977, p. 35). An object's value simply consists in it being such that one ought to take an appropriate stance towards it. To what extent, if at all, this undermines Mackie's famous "argument from queerness" is another matter. What makes values queer on his view is not just that they are essentially prescriptive, but that they are supposed to be objective at the same time.

Another advantage of the analysis lies in its *meta-ethical neutrality*. Cognitivists and non-cognitivists alike can adopt the view that the evaluative is reducible to the deontic, as long as they are free to interpret deontic utterances in different ways. The same applies to the conflicts between moral realists and anti-realists or between non-naturalists and naturalists. In this sense, then, the analysis is orthogonal to the main meta-ethical controversies.

A further advantage has to do with the *versatility* of this format of analysis. FA-approach easily lends itself to value pluralism. We can distinguish between different kinds of value in terms of different kinds of pro-attitudes or pro-responses that are fitting with respect to different objects. The latter can be admirable, desirable, pleasurable, awe-inspiring, etc. (Anderson 1993 and Swanton 2003, ch. 2).

Pluralism about kinds of value goes hand in hand with pluralism about value bearers. It is arguable that value accrues to objects belonging to different ontological categories (states of affairs, persons, things, social institutions, etc.), insofar as it is fitting to have pro-attitudes towards these different objects.

The kinds of positive responses that are appropriate with respect to one kind of object need not be appropriate, and might even be impossible, with respect to an

object of another kind. You can admire a person but not a state of affairs; you can rejoice in a state but you cannot rejoice in a person. It should be noted that an object might call for a combination of different pro-attitudes and pro-responses (say, a social institution might deserve to be promoted, desired, protected, cared for, etc.), but there's still room for value heterogeneity if such combinations of appropriate responses can significantly differ for different objects.

But it is also possible for an FA-analyst to be a monist about value. One might try to find a common component in different kinds of pro-attitudes and analyze value in terms of this common core. Or one might fix on one of the many kinds of pro-attitudes or responses (say, on desire or pursuit), and analyze value in terms of this particular kind of response.

The versatility of FA-analysis also shows up in how easy it is to extend it to *value relations*. One object can be said to be more valuable than another if it is fitting to favor it more, equally valuable if it is fitting to favor both equally, incommensurable in value if the degrees of favoring that are fitting for each of them are incomparable in strength. If the deontic component in the analysis can be assumed to either consist in a *requirement* or in a *permission*, as the case may be, the set of possible types of value relations increases. Thus, for example, objects *x* and *y* can be said to be *on a par* if it is permissible to favor *x* more than *y* and also permissible to favor *y* more than *x*. (For FA-style modellings of different types of value relations, see Gert 2004 and Rabinowicz 2008, 2009.)

Moving now to objections against FA-analysis, one group of criticisms has to do with potential *circularities* of this account, in its deontic component or in the attitudinal component. If, as for instance W. D. Ross has suggested (see below), pro-attitudes essentially involve evaluations *and* if the concept of a pro-attitude for this reason cannot be understood if you lack the concept of value, then analyzing the latter concept by reference to pro-attitudes becomes circular (see ROSS, W. D.). Whether this circularity is vicious depends on what the analysis is supposed to achieve. Wiggins, for one, is willing to admit the circularity but argues that, due to its "detour through sentiments", the analysis nevertheless is informative (Wiggins 1987: 189).

It isn't obvious, however, that the relevant attitudes must be essentially evaluative. (Cf. below, for Ewing's response to Ross; see also D'Arms and Jacobson

2003 for a discussion of this issue.) Nor is it obvious that a satisfactory analysis of the concept of *X* must specify the essential features of *X*. Conceptual analysis is not the same as a real definition. Circularity would only arise if the evaluative language were necessary for the analytic characterization of the relevant attitudes or for the characterization of what these different attitudes have in common.

This latter problem of the *common denominator* becomes especially pressing if one opts for a pluralist version of FA-account. If pro-responses might considerably vary for different kinds of valuable objects, then what is it that they all have in common? What distinguishes the “pro” from the “con”, the positive responses from the negative ones? We need to draw a line between value and disvalue. And what distinguishes positive and negative responses from those that are neither? How should the line be drawn between the realm of value/disvalue and the rest of the world?

Enlisting psychological theories of positive and negative valence might be of some help. But, as things stand, there are several competing theories in this area, based on different general approaches to psychology. None of these theories of valence fully squares with our common-sense intuitions. (Cf. Prinz 2004, ch. 4.)

Two other important objections are both originally due to Roger Crisp. One concerns *discriminatory deficit* of the FA-format of analysis. Differences between ‘thick’ kinds of value cannot, it seems, always be cashed out in terms of different kinds of fitting responses. An example might be grace and delicacy – closely similar and yet different values. Responses that fit objects that exhibit these values do not seem to differ (Crisp 2005). One might try to deal with this difficulty by suggesting that the analysis of thick values should specify not only the fitting responses but also the properties of objects that make those responses fitting. The hope would be that some of the value differences could then be accounted for in terms of these ‘value-making’ properties. However, when it comes to closely similar values, it might be impossible to disentangle value-making properties enough to make them fit to function as *differentiae specificae* in the analysis.

Another objection is *the wrong kind of reasons problem*. (This label was coined in Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004. Cf. Crisp 2000 and D’Arms & Jacobson 2000a, 2000b.). Essentially, the difficulty is that there might exist reasons for pro-attitudes towards objects that aren’t related to their value. These reasons

might have to do with the value of the attitude itself, as opposed to that of its object. Or they might come from deontological constraints on our attitudes and responses. Such reasons obviously are of the ‘wrong kind’ from the point of view of the FA-analysis (however good they might be otherwise), since their presence does not make the objects valuable. But drawing the distinction between reasons of the right and the wrong kind, without assuming the notion of value as given, has proved to be difficult. To dissolve the problem, one might argue that reasons of the wrong kind don’t exist: the apparent candidates aren’t reasons for pro-attitudes towards the object but only reasons for pro-attitudes and pro-responses towards these pro-attitudes. Whether this is true is debatable and even if it is we would still need to know how to draw the distinction. (For references, cf. Suggested Readings.)

This list of objections to FA-analysis is incomplete (cf. for example, “the solitary goods problem” and “the distance problem” in Bykvist 2009), but it mentions those that have been most discussed.

### *History*

This section draws on Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004), which in turn draws on Dancy (2000).

Henry Sidgwick and Franz Brentano may have been the first to put forward versions of FA-analysis. In the third edition of *The Methods of Ethics*, from 1884, Sidgwick defines “the ultimately good or desirable” as “that of which we should desire the existence if our desire were in harmony with reason” (Sidgwick 1884: 108). Similar formulations appear in later editions. There is a “dictate of Reason” implanted in our notion of the good (Sidgwick 1907: 112).

In *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong* from 1889, Brentano states that “[i]n the broadest sense of the term, the good is that which is worthy of love [das Liebwerte], that which can be loved with a love that is correct [das mit richtiger Liebe zu Liebende].” (1969 [1889]: 18) Love in the relevant sense is a “higher mode” (p. 21) of taking pleasure in an object: It is neither instinctive nor blind and consists in “the natural feeling of pleasure [Gefallen]... that is experienced as being correct [als richtig charakterisierte].” (p. 22) The suggested analysis applies both to what is good in itself and what is good in virtue of something else: In the

former case, the object is “pleasing in itself” and in the latter it is “pleasing in virtue of what it brings about or preserves or makes probable” (p. 18).

Furthermore, the analysis is extendable to value comparisons: “one might take the better to be that which is worthy of a *greater* love” (p. 25), where “greater love” is interpreted not as one that is more intensive, but as a dyadic attitude of preference (p. 26). Thus, “worthy of greater love” can also be rendered as “preferable” [Vorzügliche]. It is noteworthy, though, that Brentano regards preference as a species of emotion (*ibid.*), rather than as a purely conative state. (Cf. Findlay 1970: 25f. For a modern Brentano-inspired approach to FA-analysis, see Mulligan 1998.)

The FA-analysis makes a brief reappearance in the writings of C. D. Broad, who suggests “X is good” might be definable “as meaning that X is such that it would be a fitting object of desire to any mind which had an adequate idea of its non-ethical characteristics.” (Broad 1930: 283)

W. D. Ross opposes the idea. He agrees that statements of the form “x is good” can be paraphrased as saying that x is a “worthy” or “fit” “object of admiration,” if x is an action or a moral disposition (cf. Ross 1939: 276, 278). Pleasant objects, on the other hand, are fitting objects of “satisfaction” (*ibid.*). But while the paraphrase in terms of satisfaction could be construed as an analysis of ‘good’, the same does not apply to admiration:

[A]dmiration is not a mere emotion; it is an emotion accompanied by the thought that that which is admired is good. And if we ask on what ground a thing is worthy of being thought to be good, only one answer is possible, namely that it *is* good. It would be absurd to say that a thing is good only in the sense that it is worthy of being thought to be good, for our definition of ‘good’ would then include the very word ‘good’ which we were seeking to define. (Ross 1939: 278f, his emphasis.)

Ross’ reasons for rejecting FA-analysis thus seem to be twofold. Firstly, the goodness of an object cannot consist in its being worthy of admiration since goodness is the very feature that makes the object worthy to be admired. Secondly, the attitude of admiration involves a judgment that the object admired is good. This would make any analysis of goodness in terms of admiration circular (if the analysis of admiration requires reference to the purported judgmental component of this attitude).

The foremost exponent of the FA-analysis in the twentieth century, A. C. Ewing, rejects both these objections (see EWING, A. C.). In *The Definition of Good*, he defines “good” as “fitting object of a pro attitude” (Ewing 1947: 152), with “pro attitude” being intended to cover “any favourable attitude to something” (p. 149), such as “choice, desire, liking, pursuit, approval, admiration” (*ibid.*). Cf. also Ewing (1939), p. 9: “What is good is a suitable object of pro-attitudes, what is evil a suitable object of anti-attitudes. What is intrinsically good is a suitable object of a pro-attitude for its own sake.” The notion of an attitude is here interpreted very broadly: it includes responses with strong behavioral components, along with purely mental states and dispositions. Ewing stresses that different pro-attitudes or combinations of such attitudes fit different kinds of valuable objects, which he takes to show that “good” can have different senses (Ewing 1947: 166f). In response to Ross’s objections, he argues that

the reason why it is proper to admire anything must be constituted by the qualities which make the object of admiration good, but it does not follow that the thought that it is good must, if the admiration is to be justifiable, intervene between the perception of the factual qualities admired and the feeling of admiration. (*ibid.*: 158)

[T]he ground [for a pro attitude being fitting] lies not in [...] goodness, but in the concrete, factual characteristics of what we pronounce good. Certain characteristics are such that the fitting response to what possesses them is a pro attitude, and that is all there is to it. (p. 172)

Thus, (i) admiration is a fitting response because of the object’s ‘good-making’ qualities and *not* because of its goodness. For this reason, (ii) the attitude of admiration need not involve or presuppose any judgment that the object admired is good.

Terms such as “fitting” or “worthy” might invite an evaluative reading. But on that reading, we would get a new circularity: x is valuable = it is valuable to have a pro-attitude towards x. According to Ewing, that an attitude is fitting means that it is an attitude one *ought* to take. In contrast to G. E. Moore, Ewing takes this deontic notion to be primitive. The relevant ‘ought’, however, is not the ought of moral obligation. It is not obvious that we are *morally* required to have a pro-attitude towards, say, pleasure, even though pleasure is a thing of value. Ewing argues that there are two primitive deontic concepts: the ought of fittingness and the moral ought. It is the former that should be used in FA-analysis.



In *Second Thoughts in Moral Philosophy* from 1959, Ewing modifies his view. He now interprets the ought of fittingness as the ought of “reasonableness” (Ewing 1959: 86, 90): That a pro-attitude is fitting with regard to an object means that the object justifies that attitude or provides reasons for it. Secondly, he suggests that some senses of ‘good’ should be analyzed in terms of the moral ought while for other senses the ought of reasonableness is appropriate (ibid.: 98f).

After Ewing, FA-analysis disappeared from the center of debate for several decades. It did get a short mention in Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*, where it was applied to the attributive usage of “good”: “A is a good X if and only if A has the properties (to a higher degree than the average or standard X) which it is rational to want in an X, given what X’s are used for, or expected to do, and the like (whichever rider is appropriate)” (Rawls 1971: 399). Later on, it was also adopted by McDowell (1985: 118), Chisholm (1986: 52), Falk (1986: 117f), Wiggins (1987: 206, 202f), Gibbard (1990: 51, 1998: 241), Anderson (1993: 2, 17) and Lemos (1994: 12).

This short list is by no means complete, but not until T. M. Scanlon’s influential *What We Owe to Each Other* from 1998 did the FA-analysis experience a true revival in the philosophical community. While Scanlon does not refer to Ewing, there are clear similarities between their views, even though the version Scanlon puts forward is cast in terms of *reasons* rather than in terms of ‘fittingness’ or ‘ought’:

[Contrary to Moore, I believe that] being good, or valuable is not a property that itself provides a reason to respond to a thing in certain ways. Rather, to be good or valuable is to have other properties that constitute such reasons. Since the claim that some property constitutes a reason is a normative claim, this account also [i.e., like Moore’s] takes goodness and value to be non-natural properties, namely the purely formal, higher-order properties of having some lower-order properties that provide reasons of the relevant kind. [...] it is not goodness or value itself that provides reasons but rather other properties that do so. For this reason I call it a buck-passing account. (Scanlon 1998: 97)

By a “higher-order property” Scanlon doesn’t mean a property of a property, as the standard use would have it, but a property of an object consisting in its having other properties that have a certain feature. One might put his proposal roughly as follows: *x* is valuable = *x* has properties that provide reasons for favoring *x*.

As we have seen, this *buck-passing account of value* can already be found in Ewing: “[T]he ground [for a pro attitude being fitting] lies not in [...]”

goodness, but in the concrete, factual characteristics of what we pronounce good.” (Ewing 1947: 172) The positive part of this account is implied by FA-analysis combined with the thesis of value supervenience: Given FA-analysis, the features on which the object’s value supervenes make the object fitting to be favored, i.e. provide reasons for favoring it. It is different with the negative part, which is the buck-passing account’s *differentia specifica*: FA-analysis, as such, need not exclude the possibility of value itself also being a reason-provider for pro-attitudes and pro-responses. Still, it is tempting for the FA-analysts to accept the negative claim as well. However, even a buck-passer can treat value as a reason-provider in a secondary, epistemic sense. That an object has properties that are reasons for favoring it (which is what it is for it to be valuable) does not explain why we ought to favor it, but it still is evidence that we ought and to that extent itself is a reason to favor the object. It is not, however, any *additional* reason, over and above the properties that make the object valuable. (Cf. Schroeder 2009.).

#### SEE ALSO

BROAD, C. D.; BRENTANO, FRANZ; BUCK-PASSING ACCOUNT; COGNITIVISM; DESIRE; EVALUATIVE VS. DEONTIC CONCEPTS; EWING, A. C.; FRANKENA, WILLIAM; GOOD AND GOOD FOR; GOODNESS, VARIETIES OF; INCOMMENSURABILITY (AND INCOMPARABILITY); INSTRUMENTAL VALUE; MACKIE, J. L.; MOORE G. E.; NON-COGNITIVISM; NON-NATURALISM, ETHICAL; NORMATIVITY; OUGHT; PREFERENCE; PRO ATTITUDES; QUEERNESS, ARGUMENT FROM; RAWLS, JOHN; REALISM, MORAL; REASONS; ROSS, W. D.; SIDGWICK, HENRY; VALUE PLURALISM; WRONG KIND OF REASONS PROBLEM

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