

No Good Fit: Why the Fitting Attitude Analysis of Value Fails

KRISTER BYKVIST

Understanding value in terms of fitting attitudes is all the rage these days. According to this fitting attitude analysis of value (FA-analysis for short) what is good is what it is fitting to favour in some sense. Many aspects of the FA-analysis have been discussed. In particular, a lot of discussion has been concerned with the wrong-reason objection: it can be fitting to have an attitude towards something for reasons that have nothing to do with the value the thing has in itself. Much less attention has been paid to the problem of identifying the relevant attitudes in virtue of which value is supposed to be defined. An old complaint, however, is that the FA-analysis is bound to be circular, because the fitting attitude is best seen as an evaluative judgement or an evaluative experience. In this paper, I am arguing that the challenge to find a non-circular account is deepened by the fact that on many popular non-evaluative understandings of favouring, there are good states of affairs that it is never fitting to favour, because it is logically impossible or irrational to favour them. I will also show that the remaining candidate of favouring, 'imaginative emotional feeling', will generate a new version of the wrong-reason objection if it is put to use in the FA-account. I shall conclude that the prospects of finding a non-circular FA-analysis look bleak.

1. Introduction

Understanding value in terms of fitting attitudes is all the rage these days. According to this analysis (FA-analysis for short) what is good is what it is fitting to favour in some sense, what is bad is what it is fitting to disfavour in some sense, and what is better is what it is fitting to prefer or favour more.¹ Many aspects of the FA-analysis have been discussed recently. In particular, a lot of discussion has been concerned with the 'wrong kind of reason' objection (in short, the WKR-objection): it can be fitting to have an attitude towards something for reasons

¹ The historical roots of the FA-analysis can be traced back to Brentano (1969). Broad (1930) and Ewing (1947, 1959) are examples of more recent proponents. The main proponents in the modern debate include Chisholm (1981, 1986), McDowell (1985), Lemos (1994), Gibbard (1990, 1998), Mulligan (1998), Zimmerman (2001), Wiggins (1987), D'Arms and Jacobson (2000), and Oddie (2005). Scanlon (1998) revived one particular version of the FA-analysis, the 'buck-passing' account, which can be traced back to Ewing. On this version, goodness is the (second-order) property of having properties that provide reason for attitudes.

that have nothing to do with the value of the thing itself.² Much less attention has been paid to the problem of identifying the relevant attitudes in virtue of which value is supposed to be defined. An old complaint, however, is that the FA-analysis is bound to be circular, because the fitting attitude is best seen as an evaluative judgement or an evaluative experience. In this paper I am arguing that the challenge to find a non-circular analysis is deepened by the fact that if one adopts the standard accounts of *non-evaluative* favouring there will be good states of affairs that it is never fitting to favour or at least not fitting to favour to a degree that corresponds to their actual values.

After some stage-setting in sections 2 and 3, I will argue, in sections 4 and 5, that no matter how the WKR-problem is resolved there is large group of attitudes that cannot be incorporated into an FA-account. This group includes the attitudes of desire (seen as choice-disposition), intentional pursuit, and truth- or belief-entailing propositional pleasure. I will show that there are good things that it would be logically impossible or irrational to favour in these senses. In section 6, I will show that one of the remaining candidates, ‘imaginative emotional feeling’, an attitude that is neither a choice disposition, nor a belief- or truth-entailing emotion, will generate a new version of the WKR-objection, if it is put to use in the FA-account. Whereas the old version of the WKR-objection focused on cases where it is fitting to favour (disfavour) something because of factors that have nothing to do with the goodness (badness) of the thing itself, the new version focuses on cases where the *degree* to which we should favour (disfavour) something does not correspond to the *degree* to which the thing is good (bad) in itself.

In section 7, I will argue that defining favouring in terms of *normative* experiences will also lead to problems. Finally, in section 8, I will touch upon the problem of comparability that will haunt any FA-account that claims that different kinds of things merit different kinds of favouring. I will conclude by pointing out that if favouring is identified with evaluative judgements all these problems will be avoided but at the cost of making the FA-account circular.

2. Preliminaries

Even though I have stated the FA-analysis in terms of ‘fittingness’, some versions of this analysis would replace ‘fitting’ with some other deontic notion such as ‘reason’, ‘reasonableness’, ‘appropriateness’, ‘require-

² See e.g. Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004, Crisp 2000, Olson 2004, and D’Arms and Jacobson 2000.

ment', 'rightness', and 'ought'. What is common to all these accounts, however, is that value is explained by something deontic. In this paper, nothing hangs on which particular deontic notion is adopted, but for ease of exposition I will mainly stick to 'fittingness'.³

I shall also assume that the value we are interested in is intrinsic or final: the value a thing has in itself or for its own sake.⁴ My target will be the idea that what is good in itself or for its own sake is what it is fitting to favour in itself or for its own sake. (To avoid cluttering the exposition, I will henceforth often drop the qualifiers 'in itself' and 'for its own sake'.)

The proponents of the FA-analysis often point out that a great advantage of their theory is that they can provide a recipe for analysing different value concepts that apply to different ontological categories. In this paper, however, I am going to focus exclusively on *states of affairs*. This does not mean that I deny that intrinsic value can be assigned to other entities. I am only assuming that intrinsic value can be assigned to at least states of affairs.

As a test-runner for the FA-analysis I will mainly be using what I take to be an uncontroversial example of a coherent axiology, namely, simple hedonism. This axiology assigns positive value only to states of affairs that involve sensory pleasure, negative value only to states of affairs that involve sensory displeasure, and neutral value (or no value) to any other state of affairs.

3. A more precise statement of the FA-analysis

Without a more precise statement of the FA-analysis it is easy to find faults with it. I have said that the FA-analysis claims that the good is what it is fitting to favour. This should not be understood as 'the good is what is in fact fittingly favoured', for what is good need not be actually favoured (Lemos 1994, p. 8). Nor should we understand the claim as 'what is good is that what, *if* favoured, is fittingly favoured', for if this 'if' signifies a material implication, we would have the absurd result

³This choice of term is perhaps not ideal, since some would argue that 'fittingness' is best understood as referring to something between the (simply) evaluative and the (simply) deontic. I will not take a stand on the issue of whether there is such a third category, but I share Hurka's doubts about this category (see Hurka 2003). For a more positive assessment of this category, see Olson and Danielsson 2007. In any case, my main focus in this essay is the FA-analysis that aims to reduce value to something (simply) deontic.

⁴Final value and intrinsic value need not come to the same thing, if the latter is defined as 'valuable in virtue of intrinsic features only'. The final value of a thing can depend on its extrinsic features. Think of stamp that is valuable in virtue of being rare. I will put this issue aside in the following, since my main arguments do not depend on this distinction. However, I will come back to this distinction towards the end of section 6, where it does seem to matter.

that anything that is not favoured is good. (Lemos 1994, p. 8). These problems are avoided if we follow Broad, Chisholm, Lemos, and Zimmerman, and assume that a state of affairs is good if and only if it *would* be fitting to favour it, *if* we were epistemically familiar with it. This epistemic familiarity can be spelt out in different ways. It could be seen as having ‘adequate idea of its non-ethical characteristics’ (Broad 1930, pp. 280), or ‘contemplation of it as such’ (Chisholm 1981 and 1986, Lemos 1994, and Zimmerman 2001). It seems clear, however, that it will at least involve a proper grasp of all the intrinsic features of the thing considered. Using ‘contemplation’ as a place-holder for this epistemic familiarity, the analysis could be stated thus:

FA: p is good =_{df.} p is such that it would be fitting to favour p , if one were to contemplate p ⁵

This formulation has the further advantage of avoiding telling us that it is fitting for us to favour good states of affairs we do not or cannot grasp. Only those good states of affairs that we do contemplate and thus grasp to some extent are such that it is fitting for us to favour them. I shall also follow Chisholm and Lemos in assuming that ‘ p ’ ranges over abstract states of affairs that can exist without obtaining. If only concrete states of affairs are allowed to be value-bearers, we run into tricky problems about how to assign value to non-actual possibilities. For instance, we can no longer say that there being happy gnomes is good (or would be good if *it* obtained), for what is good is never abstract states of affairs, not even obtaining ones, but only concrete ones.⁶

4. Three main forms of love and the problem of ‘solitary’ goods

The FA-slogan is often loosely expressed as ‘what is good is what it is fitting to love’. We should therefore ask whether there is an interpretation of love that would make the FA-account plausible. As Hurka points

⁵ Chisholm (1981), Lemos (1994), and Zimmerman (2001) would add that in order for p to be good it p must be *essentially* or *necessarily* such that it would be fitting to favour it, if one were to contemplate it as such. This would make goodness an essential property of a state of affairs, one that it has to carry with it from one possible world to another. I have avoided adding this qualification, since my arguments do not depend on whether good states of affairs are essentially good.

⁶ A way round this difficulty is proposed in Zimmerman 2001, p. 52. Zimmerman claims that instead of saying that the non-obtaining state of affairs there being happy gnomes is good (or would be good if it obtained), we should say that if the abstract state of affairs there being happy gnomes were to obtain, then there would be a concrete state of gnomes, consisting in their being happy, that would be good. Instead of going down this revisionary route, which I doubt will get around the problem, I shall stick to the traditional and much simpler idea that what is good and what can be fittingly favoured is the same abstract state of affairs.

out, 'love' comes in three main forms: 'one can love x by desiring or wishing for it when it does not obtain, by actively pursuing it to make it obtain, or by taking pleasure in it when it does obtain'. (Hurka 2001, p. 13). I shall therefore begin by examining FA-accounts that employ one of these three forms of love. I shall argue that these accounts will have problems with '*solitary*' goods, good states of affairs that entail that there are no past, present, or future favourers of a certain kind.

4.1 Pursuit

The first account I shall discuss is the teleological one according to which to favour something is to pursue it. On this view the good is what it would be fitting to pursue, or as Ewing once tentatively suggested:

'the good' means 'what is fitting to bring into existence for its own sake', or 'what ought to be brought into existence, other things being equal'. (Ewing 1939, p. 8)

Since pursuit can be both successful and unsuccessful, this account comes in two versions, one that identifies favouring with *successful* pursuit, and one that identifies favouring with *mere* pursuit. The problem with the first version is that there are '*solitary*' good states of affairs that are logically impossible to intentionally bring about and thus impossible to successfully pursue. Take, for instance,

there being happy egrets but no past, present or future agents (i.e. beings who intentionally bring something about)⁷

This is a good state of affairs that it is not fitting to intentionally bring about, for the simple reason that it is logically impossible to intentionally bring it about that there is no present, past or future agent who brings anything about. I am here relying on the uncontroversial principle that what it is fitting to favour must be logically possible to favour.⁸

We cannot avoid this problem by revising the FA-analysis so that it claims that something is good if and only if it would be fitting to favour it, if one were to contemplate it and *one were able to favour it*. Since it is impossible for anyone to favour (intentionally bring about) there being

⁷ If egrets are able to intentionally bring about things, then this state of affairs is impossible, and therefore perhaps not a legitimate object of evaluation. To make sure that we are considering a possible state of affairs we could easily change the example so that it talks about some other creatures that can feel sensory pleasure but are unable to intentionally bring about anything.

⁸ If neutral value is assigned to *logically impossible* state of affairs such as $2 + 2 = 5$, then we can construct another counterexample. *There being happy egrets while $2 + 2 = 5$* is then good according to simple hedonism since it entails only good or neutral states of affairs, yet it is logically impossible to bring it about.

happy egrets but no agents, the counterfactual mentioned in the *definiens* of the revised FA-analysis would have a necessarily false antecedent and thus the whole counterfactual would come out as vacuously true. This would have the absurd result that anything that is impossible to favour would be good.

Identifying favouring with mere seeking or pursuing will create similar difficulties. Even if it is logically possible to seek or pursue things that are logically impossible to bring about—what you seek or pursue need not come about—it can hardly be fitting to seek and pursue these things. Pursuit cannot be the appropriate response to the unachievable.

Of course, it can be fitting to seek and pursue something unachievable *given* one's false belief that it is achievable. But this notion of *subjective* fittingness is not what the proponents of the FA-analysis have in mind. Since they want to define objective value, they have to talk about what it is fitting to favour *period*, not what it is fitting to favour in light of one's possibly mistaken beliefs (see e.g. Zimmerman 2001, p. 91.)

But what about the ideal of moral perfection? Is it not reasonable to pursue moral perfection even if it is unachievable? 'Be ye perfect' does not seem to be intended as a command that is to be qualified with a limp 'if you can.'⁹ In reply, I would say that moral perfection is best seen as an aspirational good and our aim is therefore not to achieve the unachievable but to achieve the highest possible degree of moral perfection.

This is not to deny that it can also be fitting in an *instrumental* sense to seek or pursue what is impossible to bring about. Perhaps someone will pay you a fortune if you somehow manage to seek or pursue something that cannot be brought about. But these are clear cases of the 'wrong kind of reason' phenomenon. That it is fitting in this instrumental sense to seek and pursue certain things does not tell us anything about the intrinsic or final value of these things.

Finally, it can perhaps be *epistemically* fitting for you to seek to construct a valid proof of a certain mathematical statement, which unbeknownst to you is false, for by doing this you will gain knowledge about mathematics.¹⁰ But this does not show that the impossible proof is good. At most, it shows that it is instrumentally fitting to seek to construct the proof because it will lead to something good, for example, mathematical knowledge.

⁹ Roger Crisp suggested this objection to me.

¹⁰ Gustaf Arrhenius alerted me to this case.

4.2 Desire

Another popular account is to identify favouring with a desire seen as some kind of choice disposition. An analysis of this kind has been proposed by Gibbard who states that:

To be desirable, we might say, is to be desired fittingly, or justifiably, or rationally. Or since desirable things might not be desired at all, we should speak hypothetically: something is desirable if it *would* be reasonable to desire it. (Gibbard 1998, p. 241)

The problem of identifying goodness with desirability in this sense is that if it is not fitting to seek or pursue things that are logically impossible to bring about, it seems equally true to say that it is not fitting to desire, in the sense of having a disposition to bring about, something that it is logically impossible to bring about. But, as we have seen, there are good things that are logically impossible to bring about.

As with seeking and pursuing, it can be fitting in an *instrumental* sense to have a disposition to bring about what is impossible to bring about. But, again, the fact that it is fitting in an instrumental sense to desire certain things does not tell us anything about the intrinsic or final value of these things.

I do not wish to deny that there might be some other sense of desire according to which it is fitting to desire what is impossible to bring about. 'Desire' is often used as an umbrella term for a variety of different pro-attitudes, and there is nothing to prevent it being the case that it is fitting to have some pro-attitude to unrealizable states of affairs. But since we are now trying to pinpoint exactly which attitude this could be, this observation does not help. What I am arguing for here is that on one common understanding of 'desire', it cannot be fitting to desire the unrealizable. I will come back later in section 7 to some other common interpretations of 'desire'.

4.3 Pleasure

The proponent of the FA-analysis could of course deny that favouring should be identified with any teleological attitude or choice disposition. One obvious candidate we have not discussed yet is *pleasure*. Now, since we are talking about fitting attitudinal responses to states of affairs, bodily pleasures are ruled out. We cannot feel bodily pleasure towards a state of affairs. One possible candidate is 'taking pleasure in something' or 'being pleased about something'. But the problem of identifying favouring with this kind of propositional pleasure is that it is a belief-entailing attitude. You cannot take pleasure in something, without believing that

it is the case.¹¹ For instance, if you take pleasure in having a bath, then you believe that you are having a bath. To see the problem with identifying favouring with pleasure-taking, consider the state of affairs

there being happy egrets but no (past, present, or future) believers¹²

If we want to say that it is fitting to take pleasure in this state of affairs, we have to accept that it is fitting to have an attitude that involves a belief that is self-undermining. For, necessarily, if a person believes that there are happy egrets but no believers, his belief is false.¹³ But it can hardly be fitting to undermine oneself in this way.

One could object here that my argument conflates rational and moral fittingness.¹⁴ Even if it is not *rationally* fitting to take belief-entailing pleasure in there being happy egrets but no believers because that would ensure that your belief is false, it can still be *morally* fitting to take pleasure in this state of affairs.

In response, I would first say that even though rational and moral fittingness need not go hand in hand, it is worrying that there are some good things that it is logically impossible to endorse rationally. It is one thing to say that morality and rationality can clash for contingent reasons, quite another to say that for some parts of morality such clashes are logically necessary.

Secondly, note that taking belief-entailing pleasure in there being happy egrets but no believers necessarily precludes the obtaining of this good. But how can an attitude be a morally fitting response towards a good, if it necessarily prevents the obtaining of this good? How can it be morally fitting to respond to a good in a way that makes sure that it does not obtain?

Things are even worse, if we assume with Gordon (1974) and Davis (1981) that pleasure-taking is also truth-entailing (if you take pleasure in *p*, *p* is the case), then we will inherit the objection raised against the

¹¹ At least, this seems to be the common view (see e.g. Feldman 2004, p. 59). A possible counterexample is the pleasure we take in fantasies and fiction. But, as Feldman (*ibid.*) points out, when I take pleasure in a scene in which Forrest Gump meets President Kennedy what I take pleasure in might be the way in which they make it seem that Forrest Gump could have met President Kennedy. In any case, even if you deny that propositional pleasure is belief-entailing, there will be other difficulties to overcome, as I discuss in section 6.

¹² One may doubt that this is a possible state of affairs, since egrets can plausibly be said to have some beliefs. But we could easily change the example and instead talk about some clearly belief-less creature that nevertheless feels some sensory pleasure.

¹³ Schick (2003, p. 99) calls belief contents of this kind 'not properly believable', and discusses the significance of this for scepticism and self-knowledge. What I am arguing is that it cannot be fitting to take belief-entailing pleasure in something that is not properly believable.

¹⁴ Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen and Earl Conee pressed me on this point.

teleological account. It will be logically impossible to take pleasure in 'solitary' states of affairs such as

there being happy egrets but no one who takes pleasure in anything¹⁵

But, again, it cannot be fitting to favour something that is logically impossible to favour.

One might try to dismiss these worries by saying that a good state of affairs does not merit our *actual* taking pleasure in the state of affairs, since we might know that it does not obtain, but rather our being such that we *would* take pleasure in it, if it obtained. For instance, if, in fact, there are no happy egrets, it can hardly be fitting to take belief- or truth-entailing pleasure in there being happy egrets. What is fitting is rather that I am such that I would take pleasure in it, if it obtained.

This response, however, is of no help for the cases we are discussing. It cannot be fitting to be such that one would take belief-entailing pleasure in there being happy egrets but no believers, if this state of affairs obtained, for if it obtained, there would be no believers. So, no one can be such that she would take belief-entailing pleasure in it, if it obtained. Similarly, it cannot be fitting to be such that one would take truth-entailing pleasure in there being happy egrets but no pleasure-takers, for if this state obtained, no one would take pleasure in it. So, no one can be such that she would take truth-entailing pleasure in it, if it obtained.

5. Basic and non-basic intrinsic value

One general reply to the objections I have raised so far is to distinguish between basic and non-basic intrinsic value and claim that the FA-analysis should only be applied to basic values. Roughly, the basic intrinsic values are the axiological 'atoms' that have intrinsic value in a wholly non-derivative way (see e.g. Feldman 2004, pp. 172–82). Other things have intrinsic value only in so far as they involve these atoms. Using this distinction, one could argue that there being happy egrets has basic *positive* value, whereas there being no agents, there being no believers, and there being no pleasure-takers all have basic *neutral* value.¹⁶ What the 'solitary' good states of affairs have in common is that they are good in

¹⁵ One might wonder if this state of affairs is possible since if the egrets are happy they must feel some pleasure. But note that their pleasures might be only of the non-propositional bodily kind. We need not assume that the egrets take pleasure *in* anything.

¹⁶ Strictly speaking, these assignments of basic values do not seem to be correct. There being happy egrets does not seem to be a good candidate for a basic good. A better candidate is perhaps any states of affair of the form 'S feels pleasure to degree *n* at time *t*' (see Feldman 2004, pp. 172–82).

virtue of involving the state of affairs there being happy egrets, and not in virtue of involving any of the other neutral states of affairs.

Revised in this way the FA-analysis would say that what it is fitting to favour is only what is *basically* good. Other good states of affairs are good in virtue of involving states of affairs that are basically good. This will avoid the problems we have discussed so far since it is both logically possible and not self-undermining to intentionally bring about or take pleasure in there being happy egrets. This, however, is a radical revision of the original proposal since the things we often evaluate are wider states of affairs, such as situations, outcomes, and lives, and perhaps even whole possible worlds, none of which has basic value according to simple hedonism.¹⁷ It does not seem plausible to say that good things of this kind do not merit our favouring. Much of the attractiveness of the FA-account is therefore lost by limiting its application in this way.

It should also be noted that it seems coherent, but perhaps not plausible, to ascribe *basic* value to state of affairs that exclude there being any agents, believers, or pleasure-takers. Perhaps some extreme environmentalists who value ‘desert landscapes untouched by humans’ would accept this. An FA-account of the revised sort would have to say that such an axiology is conceptually confused.

A more pressing worry is that this revision might not be sufficient to avoid all problems. Recall that the FA-analysis is not just an account of absolute values, goodness, badness, and neutrality, it is also an account of betterness: what is better is what it is fitting to prefer or favour more. Since good things are better than neutral things, the FA-account must claim that it is fitting to prefer (or favour more) good things than neutral things. Now, the states of affairs there being no agents, there being no believers, and there being no pleasure-takers are all basically neutral states of affairs. This means that the state of affairs there being happy egrets is *basically better* than any of these neutral states of affairs, and consequently, it must be fitting to prefer (or favour more) there being happy egrets to any of them. But does this make sense on the accounts we have discussed? Take the account that identifies favouring with some choice disposition. Applied to basic betterness, this account would say that since there being happy egrets is basically better than there being no agents, it is fitting to be disposed to bring about that there are happy egrets when one can choose between bringing this about and bringing about that there are no past, present, or future agents. But since a

¹⁷ It will not do to say that what entails something basically good and nothing basically bad should be favoured *for the sake of its good parts*, since what is favoured for the sake of its part is still favoured (i.e. intentionally brought about, pursued, or desired).

choice disposition of this kind is about an impossible choice—what one would choose in an impossible choice situation—it cannot be fitting to have this disposition.

In fact, it is difficult to make sense of this disposition in the first place. What does it mean to say that one is disposed to choose something in an impossible situation? If dispositions are understood in terms of counterfactuals, for example, in terms of what one would choose in a certain choice situation, the standard semantics of counterfactuals will guarantee that we have a disposition to choose *anything* in impossible situations. Since an impossibility entails anything it will entail any proposition about what one chooses, for instance, that one chooses to become a triangle. Now, in general, if p entails q , then p counterfactually implies q . Since being in an impossible choice situation entails choosing to become a triangle, being in an impossible situation will counterfactually imply that one chooses to become a triangle. But on the counterfactual analysis of dispositions, this means that one has a disposition to choose to become a triangle when faced with an impossible choice situation. Of course, analogous reasoning can be used to show that one also has a disposition to choose not to become a triangle.

One could dismiss this argument by claiming that it assumes an all too simple-minded analysis of choice dispositions. In particular, one could claim that choice dispositions are ‘belief-channelled’, to use Pettit’s apt phrase (Pettit 1996). To prefer x to y is not simply to choose x when one has a choice between x and y ; it is to choose to act with the intention of bringing about x when one *believes* one has a choice between x and y . Even if it is impossible to choose x over y , it can be possible to believe mistakenly that one can realize x and therefore act with the intention to bring about x . But I doubt that this more sophisticated analysis of choice dispositions will help, since it can hardly be fitting to have a choice disposition that can only be manifested in situations in which one is seriously confused about what is within one’s power.

Another and more radical response is to abandon the standard semantics for counterfactuals and deny that all counterfactuals with a necessary false antecedent are vacuously true. Some counterfactuals with necessarily false antecedents are false and some are non-trivially true. To make sense of this while sticking to a possible world framework we would have to introduce impossible worlds and similarity relations between them. But it is difficult to get a plausible semantics out of this, and even more difficult to make sense of it ontologically. One price you have to pay is to give up either the principle that impossibilities entail anything or the principle that if p entails q , then p counterfactually

implies q . In any case, the attractiveness of the FA-analysis would be seriously diminished if it requires us to make sense of counterpossibles.

It should be noted here that I am talking about *logical* impossibilities.¹⁸ I do not wish to deny that we can make sense of counterpossibles when the possibility that is countered is psychological, technological, or nomical. It does not seem far-fetched to allow for dispositions to choose things in choice situations that are merely psychologically, technologically, or nomically impossible. For instance, it seems to make sense to say that I have now a disposition to choose to save all the starving people in the world since it can be non-vacuously true that I would save these people, if, *per impossibile*, I had it within my power to save them. In this case, we could perhaps say that I have an idle desire (a wish) to save all the starving people in the world.¹⁹

The teleological accounts seem to face analogous problems since they seem to be forced to define basic betterness in terms of the fittingness of bringing about one state of affairs *rather than another* or pursuing one *more* than another. Even if it might be true in a trivial sense that you bring about a possible state of affairs rather than a state of affairs that cannot possibly be brought about, or that you pursue a possible state of affairs more than one that is impossible to successfully pursue, there will still be a problem about how to make sense of the fact that there being no agents (a neutral thing) is basically better than there being *unhappy* egrets (a bad thing). It does not make sense to say that you bring about a state of affairs that is impossible to bring about rather than one that is possible to bring about. Furthermore, even if it is possible to unsuccessfully pursue the unrealizable more than the realizable, it surely cannot be fitting to pursue the unrealizable more.

The account that identifies favouring with belief- or truth-entailing propositional pleasure would have to say that x is basically better than y

¹⁸ In fact, the impossibility we have in mind seems to be *strictly logical*, not just metaphysical. Bringing about something that entails that there is no one ever who brings anything about is an explicit contradiction. There is therefore no need for me to take stand on whether non-trivial truth and falsity can be ascribed to a counterfactual in which the antecedent involves a metaphysical impossibility but no explicit contradiction. Wlodek Rabinowicz helped me to get clear on this.

¹⁹ What about a desire for the past? Is it meaningful to ascribe people a desire to change the past? Well, this depends on whether you think the past is fixed. There seems to be some state of affairs about the past that it is now within our power to change. Think of so-called 'soft facts about the past' such as Krister's smoking his last cigarette. But what about hard facts about the past? If it is logically impossible to change these facts, then we should not say that a person has a choice disposition to change them. This does not preclude us from saying that a person may still in some sense desire a different past, for remember that 'desire' is often used as an umbrella term covering an unruly lot of different pro-attitudes, including evaluative experiences and judgements. There is of course nothing strange in saying that a person desires to have had a different past in the sense of seeing this different past in a *good* light and in his actual past in a *bad* light.

if and only if it is fitting to take more pleasure in x than in y .²⁰ This implies that it is fitting to take more pleasure in there being no believers than there being unhappy egrets. But, how can it be fitting to take more pleasure in something that it is self-undermining to take pleasure in? Similarly, it is basically better that there are no pleasure-takers than that there are unhappy egrets, but, if pleasure is truth-entailing, it cannot be fitting to take more pleasure in something that it is impossible to take pleasure in.

6. Emotional love and the distance problem

If I am right in my arguments presented so far, there is no hope for the suggestion that what is good is what it is fitting to love in the sense of pursuit, desire, or truth- or belief-entailing propositional pleasure. So, we need to look for some other form of ‘love’ that has propositional content but is neither truth- nor belief-entailing.

Perhaps a ‘love’ of this sort can be found among our *emotions*. Of course, it would be a non-starter to equate favouring with emotions that involve either experiencing something as good or judging something as good, since this would render the FA-analysis circular.

It is also a non-starter to identify favouring with some *factive* emotion, such as being glad that p , delighted that p , and (on at least some interpretations) pleased that p . For then we will inherit the problems that faced the first teleological account. Since having a factive emotion entails the truth of its propositional content, it is logically impossible to have a certain factive emotion E towards

there being happy egrets but no E emotions

²⁰ This is speaking loosely. It is only fitting to take more *pleasure* in p than in q when both p and q are good. To take more pleasure in p than in q can hardly be fitting when p is *bad* but less bad than q . What we need to say is that p is better than some good state of affairs q if and only if p and q are such that if one were to contemplate p and q , it would be fitting to take more pleasure in p than in q ; p is worse than some bad state of affairs q if and only if p and q are such that if one were to contemplate p and q , it would be fitting to take more displeasure in p than in q ; a good p is better than a bad p if and only if p and q are such that if one were to contemplate p and q , it would be fitting to take pleasure in p and to take displeasure in q ; a neutral p is better than a bad q if and only if p and q are such that if one were to contemplate p and q , it would be fitting to feel indifference towards p and take displeasure in q ; a good p is better than a neutral q if and only if p and q are such that if one were to contemplate p and q , it would be fitting to take pleasure in p and feel indifference towards q . Even if, strictly speaking, one should not take more pleasure in there being no believers but only have a feeling of indifference towards this state of affairs the problem will remain since a feeling of indifference entails that one believes that the state of affairs obtains. Note that we cannot avoid the problem by defining neutral value in terms of the fittingness of the *absence* of both pleasure and displeasure, for this would be to conflate what is value-less with what has neutral value.

But then it cannot be fitting to have a factive emotion E towards a good state of affairs of this kind.

Similarly, we cannot identify favouring with any belief-entailing emotion. Since having the emotion entails that one believes that the propositional content of the emotion is true, this account will not be able to explain the goodness of the following state of affairs:

there being happy egrets but no believers²¹

It cannot be fitting to have a belief-entailing emotion towards this state of affairs, since believing that it obtains would be self-undermining.

Arguably, the category of emotions is not exhausted by evaluative, factive or belief-entailing emotions, so there might still be a suitable candidate around. What we are looking for is an emotional feeling that involves ‘thinking of with a feeling’ (Goldie 2000, p. 19), where ‘thinking of’ does not imply belief or the truth of what is thought of. Perhaps the emotional reactions involved in day-dreaming and reading fiction would fit the bill, since in these cases we seem to emotionally respond to objects and situations that we know do not exist. The new proposal would therefore be to identify favouring with some emotional feeling similar to the ones involved in day-dreaming and reading fiction.

More precisely, the suggestion is that the good is that which it is fitting to have a positive emotional feeling towards, where ‘positive’ is supposed to describe some phenomenological aspect of being in this emotional state. One view would say that what makes a feeling positive is that it involves *felt pleasure*, but we could perhaps imagine other alternative ‘positive-makers’, feelings of pushes or pulls, attraction, elation, etc. However the positive tone of the feeling is spelt out, this account encounters difficulties given the plausible assumption that what is better is what it is fitting to favour more in the sense of having a *stronger or more intense* positive emotional feeling about.²² The general problem is vividly illustrated by the following examples:

Imagine that someone has just returned from a tropical holiday marred by unreasonably bad weather. It is certainly reasonable for her to regret the loss

²¹ One may doubt that this is possible state of affairs, since egrets can plausibly be said to have some beliefs. But we could easily change the example and instead talk about some clearly belief-less creature that nevertheless feels some sensory pleasure.

²² This is a bit misleading since, strictly speaking, feeling stronger positive emotional feeling towards *p* than towards *q* can hardly be fitting when *p* is *bad* but less bad than *q*. What we need to say is that *p* is better than some good state of affairs *q* if and only if *p* and *q* are such that if one were to contemplate *p* and *q*, it would be fitting to feel stronger positive emotional feeling towards *p* than towards *q*; *p* is worse than some bad state of affairs *q* if and only if *p* and *q* are such that if one were to contemplate *p* and *q*, it would be fitting to feel stronger negative emotional feeling towards *p* than

of the extra pleasure she would have experienced given normal weather. But the simple account says she should regret even more the greater pleasure she would have enjoyed had a stranger given her million dollars on the beach, or had aliens abducted her and taken her to an intergalactic pleasure palace. Or consider a similar example involving evils. If her child had just missed being struck by a car, she should feel relief that her child did not suffer the pain of serious accident. On the simple account, she should feel even greater relief that her child was not abducted by aliens and taken to an intergalactic torture chamber. (Hurka 2001, p. 118)

Hurka's main point is a bit obscured by his stretched usage of 'relief'. Normally, we would not say that a person *can* feel relief about something if he did not see its non-occurrence as a serious possibility. But I take his general point to be that how strongly we should feel about something seems to depend on how close a possibility it is, and not just on its positive value. It does not seem to be fitting to have more intense emotional feelings towards better states of affairs that are only remote possibilities, even if it is possible to have these emotional feelings. For instance, it does not seem fitting to have a more intense emotional positive feeling towards my son's not being abducted by aliens and taken to an intergalactic torture chamber than towards my son's not suffering the pain of a serious car accident, which could have easily happened. Or, to take a more frivolous example, it does not seem fitting to have a more intense emotional feeling towards there being thousands of extremely happy gnomes than towards there being hundreds of moderately happy egrets, which arguably is an obtaining state of affairs.

Of course, this is not to deny that our emotional reactions to mere possibilities lack evaluative significance. After all, it is appropriate to say to someone who moans over some minor pain that 'things could have been much worse'. Alluding to worse possibilities often has the sobering effect of adjusting our excessive reactions to minor evils. But the relevance of being a remote possibility explains why it is inappropriate to say to your friend who is dying from cancer: 'Things could be much worse—you could have been abducted by aliens and tortured for twenty years in their intergalactic torture chamber!'

towards *q*; a good *p* is better than a bad *p* if and only if *p* and *q* are such that if one were to contemplate *p* and *q*, it would be fitting to feel a positive emotional feeling towards *p* and a negative emotional feeling towards *q*; a neutral *p* is better than a bad *q* if and only if *p* and *q* are such that if one were to contemplate *p* and *q*, it would be fitting to have an indifferent emotional feeling towards *p* and a negative emotional feeling towards *q*; a good *p* is better than a neutral *q* if and only if *p* and *q* are such that if one were to contemplate *p* and *q*, it would be fitting to have a positive emotional feeling towards *p* and an indifferent emotional feeling towards *q*.

Oddie observes a similar phenomenon in relation to the suffering of strangers:

Imagine that I have a badly fractured limb caused by a skiing accident; part of the femur is protruding through the skin, and the thing is excruciatingly painful. A stranger skiing the same slope just behind me has suffered a similar fracture, and he is now lying in the snow alongside me, suffering what appears to be the same degree of pain. I would like his pain to cease naturally, but I am even more desirous of the cessation of my own pain. When the stretcher team appears, it turns out that they have only one shot of morphine left. Since the relief of the stranger's pain is just as valuable as the relief of my pain, the merit principle [the FA-account] demands that I be indifferent as to whose pain is treated. (Oddie 2005, p. 60)²³

How strongly we should react emotionally seems also to depend on *temporal* matters. For instance, we think it is fitting that the grief of a lost beloved softens with time. More generally, 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.

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. As shown by the examples above, this distance has many dimensions, including modal distance, temporal distance, and 'personal' distance. 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. Note, however, that it does not seem fitting to *judge* a possible suffering as less bad just because it is a remote possibility, a condition of another person, or something past.

One could evade the distance problem by *relativizing* value to a perspective consisting of at least a world, a time, and a person. This would allow value to vary from one perspective to another according to how strongly it is fitting to respond to the object from a given perspective. But the FA-account would then no longer be an account of goodness period, but goodness relative to a perspective, and this would of course be bad news for those of us who believe in non-relativized value.

²³ Ewing also notices that 'it is by no means unfitting to feel more satisfaction in the happiness of my mother than in that of a total stranger, yet the two are equally valuable' (Ewing 1947, p. 159).

One non-relativistic response to this problem would of course be to deny that what is better merits a stronger emotional reaction. Indeed, this seems to be Brentano's view (Brentano 1889, pp. 25 f.), echoed by Chisholm (1986, p. 52 ff.) and Lemos (1994, p. 9 ff.). He claims instead that what is better merits a *preference*. Now, if preference is understood in terms of choice dispositions we would be back to the old problem about preferring states of affairs that it is logically impossible to bring about. But Brentano seems to think that preference should be understood as some kind of emotion. What is important to stress is that Brentano's notion of emotional preference must be logically independent of emotional favouring and disfavouring. It must be possible to feel a strong positive emotion towards *p* but a weak positive emotion towards *q* and yet prefer *q* to *p*. But this means that we have to deny the two standard accounts of how absolute attitudes relate to comparative ones:

Def. 1: *p* is preferred to *q* =_{df.} *p* and *q* are both favoured but *p* is favoured more, or *p* and *q* are both disfavoured but *p* is disfavoured less, or *p* is indifferent and *q* is disfavoured, or *p* is favoured and *q* is indifferent, or *p* is favoured and *q* is disfavoured²⁴

Def. 2: *p* is favoured =_{df.} *p* is preferred to some indifferent *q*
p is disfavoured =_{df.} some indifferent *q* is preferred to *p*
p is indifferent =_{df.} *p* is equi-preferred to not-*p*
p is favoured more than *q* =_{df.} both *p* and *q* are favoured but *p* is preferred to *q*
p is disfavoured more than *q* =_{df.} both *p* and *q* are disfavoured but *q* is preferred to *p*²⁵

If emotional preference is to be understood neither in term of choice dispositions, nor in terms of its links to emotional favouring and emotional disfavouring, it is hard to see what can be meant by emotional preference. Obviously, it would not do to understand emotional preference in terms of judging or experiencing something as better, for that would make the FA-account circular.

Zimmerman points out that there is another price to pay if one severs the link between 'favour more' and 'preference' and denies that what is better should be favoured more strongly:

it would seem that, when one contemplates two states that are intrinsically good (or bad) to different degrees, the degree of favor (or disfavor) that is

²⁴ See e.g. Zimmerman 2001, p. 128, n. 94.

²⁵ See e.g. Chisholm 1964.

most appropriate to contemplation of the less good (or bad) state must be less than the degree of favor (disfavor) that is most appropriate to contemplation of the better (worse) state. (Zimmerman 2001, p. 106)

I agree with this, at least if we add the qualification that the goods (evils) are equidistant from the favourer. Suppose, for instance, that I consider two equally remote (non-actual) possibilities concerning the same future time, one in which my son feels the minor pain of a pin-prick and one in which he suffers immensely from being tortured. Surely, it is not enough that I disfavour both possibilities. I would be a moral monster if I felt only a slight negative emotion towards my son's being tortured but a very strong negative emotion towards him feeling the pain of a pin-prick.

So we seem to be stuck with the uncomfortable view that what is better always merits a stronger emotional reaction. One ingenious way out, recently defended by Oddie, is to accept that the distance between you and the evaluated object makes a difference for how strongly you should feel about it, but claim that the objective value of a thing is identified with the degree to which it would be fitting to favour it if the distance between the thing and the favourer were narrowed down to zero (Oddie 2005, pp. 218–26). More exactly,

OFA: p is good to degree $n =_{df}$ p is such that it would be fitting to favour p to degree n , if one contemplated p and one were at zero distance from p ²⁶

This would allow for a weaker emotional reaction to more distant goods. The problem with this account is that it is not clear that all good states of affairs can be at zero distance from a favourer. Consider, for instance,

there being unhappy egrets but no favourers

No favourer can be at zero modal distance from this state of affairs, since it precludes the existence of favourers. Oddie's definition would therefore have the unfortunate implication that this state of affairs is good, since the antecedent in the definiens in OFA would be necessarily false and the whole counterfactual conditional therefore vacuously true. Of course, favourers can stand at modal zero distance from there being unhappy egrets, so Oddie could lower his ambitions and claim

²⁶This is a simplified and revised version of Oddie's account, but it will do for my purposes. It should be noted that Oddie does not defend an FA-analysis of value. He only claims that there is a necessary link between value and fitting attitudes. But my arguments against OFA apply to this weaker thesis as well.

that he is only defining basic value. But we have already pointed out the problems with this restriction in relation to the three main forms of love.

One possible response would be to claim that even if it is strictly speaking impossible to be at zero modal distance from a certain state of affairs, one could talk about an 'imaginary' zero distance, since one could imagine the state of affairs as actual. Note that in imagining a state of affairs as actual we need not imagine ourselves as taking part in the state of affairs (or in the world in which the state of affairs obtains.) More generally, the suggestion is that a state of affairs *p* is at zero distance from a favourer when she imagines it as actual, present and in the case of states of other people (and perhaps even animals), as happening to herself.

This modification would make it possible to be at zero distance from there being happy egrets but no favourers. But it is difficult to see how this would work more generally. Some good states of affairs are temporal wholes involving many different times, but it is not possible to imagine all times as simultaneously existing in the present. For instance, it is impossible to imagine each part of a good life as simultaneously existing in the present. Other good state of affairs involve different people existing at the same time, but it is not possible to imagine being in all people's shoes at the same time. In both cases, it is impossible to imagine being at zero distance from all the constituent parts of the whole and thus impossible to imagine being at zero distance from the whole.

One could claim that all we need to do is to find some privileged order in which to consider each part as present and happening to oneself. But even if we can find such an order, we still need to know from which perspective we should judge the whole. Whatever part of the whole we choose, from the perspective of that part other parts of the whole will be at some distance, and what it is fitting to feel about the whole will therefore depend on our distance from these other parts. If, on the other hand, the privileged perspective is supposed to be adopted outside the whole after one has successively imagined taking up every temporal and personal perspective involved in the whole, it is unclear what it is fitting to feel, since it is unclear what this 'view from nowhere' amounts to.

One could instead try to invoke a 'veil of ignorance' and say that the actual value of a state of affairs *p* is defined by what it would be the fitting to feel about *p*, if one were behind a veil of ignorance and did not know who one was, which time was present, or which world was actual.

So, for instance, in order to decide the objective value of Krister's being happy at t we should ask what it would be appropriate to feel about this state of affairs if one did not know whether one was Krister, whether t was now, or whether the state of affairs was actual. If this ignorance would be the same for all considered states of affairs, one could claim that we have found the perspective from which we should define objective value since from this perspective the states of affairs will be *epistemically equidistant*.

But the problem with this suggestion is that the veil will not always be thick enough to ensure complete ignorance. Some states of affairs are such that one only needs to self-consciously contemplate them in order to know that they are non-actual. For instance, any state of affairs of the form ' p and there are no past, present, or future thinkers' will bear its non-actuality on its sleeve if you self-consciously contemplate it, for if you do, you will know that you are thinking and thus know that it does not obtain.

Even if these problems can somehow be solved it is doubtful that what it is fitting to feel about a state of affairs, from a merely imagined perspective, will always reflect its actual value. Note that in merely imagining something as actual, present, and happening to oneself, one is willingly suspending disbelief in the obtaining of the state of affairs. When one self-consciously imagines p one does not form a belief that p obtains; one still maintains one's disbelief in p . So, for instance, when I imagine there being happy egrets but no favourers as something present and actual I do not come to believe that this state of affairs obtains in the actual present. This suspension of disbelief seems to make a difference to the fittingness of one's emotional responses. Consider, for instance, the moral difference between taking pleasure in revenge fantasies and taking pleasure in real revenge. Even if it is unfitting to take pleasure in real revenge it does not seem as unfitting to take pleasure in merely imagined revenge.²⁷ Furthermore, it seems fitting to take less displeasure in merely imagined revenge than in real revenge. Similarly, it is fitting to take more pleasure in there being happy gnomes when one believes (truly) that this state of affairs obtains than when one merely imagines it as actual. In sum, the suspended disbelief seems to create another relevant distance between the favourer and the object of her attitude.

As a more general response to the distance problem, one could claim that the value a thing has in itself should be defined by the attitudes it is fitting to have towards it when we contemplate only its *intrinsic* fea-

²⁷ For similar examples, see Hurka 2001, p. 165.

tures. One could even claim that this is the most natural understanding of the FA-analysis. Remember that what is good in itself could be defined as what it would be fitting to favour, if we contemplated it *as such*, which suggests that we are invited to contemplate only the *intrinsic* features of a thing.

To see how this response would work, consider the states of affairs of Jane's being in pain and of John's being in pain. Suppose that Jane is my daughter and that John is a stranger to me. Now, if I contemplate Jane's being in pain as a state of affairs that involves *my daughter* being in pain, then it seems that I am no longer contemplating this state of affairs as such; I am also contemplating it as a state of affairs that involves my daughter, but Jane's being my daughter is a relational feature of Jane's being in pain. The idea would then be to say that when I contemplate both Jane's being in pain and John's being in pain *as such*, I should respond with the same degree of favouring towards each state of affairs, but when I contemplate Jane's being in pain as a state of affairs that involves *my daughter* being in pain and John's being in pain as a state of affairs that involves *a stranger* being in pain I should (or, at least, I am permitted to) react with greater sadness towards Jane's being in pain. Since these different reactions are triggered by different relational features of the considered states of affairs, they do not reflect intrinsic value.

The problem with this approach is that there are more complex states of affairs that include the relevant relational features. Consider the states of affairs

- (a) Jane's being someone who is in pain and who is Krister's daughter

and

- (b) John's being someone who is in pain and who is a stranger to Krister

How should I (Krister) respond to these states when I contemplate them as such? The morally appropriate response seems to be for me to disfavour (a) more than (b) despite the fact that they have the same intrinsic value (assuming the duration and the intensity of the pains are the same). Hence the distance problem is not yet solved.

In order to deal with this, Zimmerman explicitly restricts the FA-analysis to basic values (Zimmerman 2001, pp. 121–3). He maintains that I am required to respond in the same way to Jane's being in pain and John's being in pain, since these states of affairs have the same basic

value (at least if we add that the duration and the intensity of these pains are identical). But he allows for the possibility that it is appropriate for me to feel greater sadness at (a) than at (b) even though the two instances of suffering have the same intrinsic value. I am allowed to respond differently to these more inclusive states of affairs, since they have the same intrinsic value only in virtue of containing states of affairs with the same basic value. (a) and (b) lack basic value and the restricted FA-account will therefore not tell me to respond equally to them—we need only respond equally to the basic values entailed by them. This is an ingenious solution, but I doubt that it will succeed.

One general worry with this account is that it assumes that value a thing has in itself depends only on its intrinsic features. This assumption is controversial. It seems that a thing can be valuable for its own sake even though its value depends in part on extrinsic features. For instance, a stamp can be valuable for its own sake partly because it is unique (a relational fact), and Diana's dress is good for its own sake partly because it belonged to Diana (a relational fact).²⁸

Another problem is that restricted in this way the FA-analysis loses some of its intuitive appeal. As I mentioned earlier in section 5, we often evaluate wider states of affairs that are not basic values: situations, outcomes, lives, and perhaps whole possible worlds. The restricted analysis would no longer say that better situations, outcomes, lives or worlds should be favoured more.

A more pressing problem is that Zimmerman will have to concede that Jane's being in pain and John's being in pain merit the same degree of positive response when contemplated as such. But it is not clear that this is what we should say. When you ask me why I care so much about Jane's being in pain it is natural for me to respond 'Jane is my daughter!'; but an equally natural response is 'It is Jane!'. Indeed, one could argue that the first response suggests that what I fundamentally care about is *whoever* happens to be my daughter, not Jane herself.

But if the response 'It is Jane!' is appropriate, then we seem to have a case in which my feeling of greater sadness at Jane's being in pain than at John's being in pain is fitting because of an *intrinsic* difference between these states of affairs—that it is Jane who suffers in the former state of affairs but not in the latter.

One could object here that my response 'It is Jane' is just shorthand for 'It is a person who is like Jane, namely, witty, understanding, charming, etcetera'. This would mean that what I am responding to is

²⁸ For more on this, see Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004, and Zimmerman 2004, Ch. 3.

not the unadorned state of affairs Jane's being in pain but the more complex state of affairs

Jane's being someone who is witty, understanding, charming, etc., and who is in pain

The problem with this objection is that it falls prey to the well-known substitution problem. If my concern for Jane is just a concern for whoever exemplifies certain contingent features, then I should be willing to trade Jane for any qualitative doppelgänger of her. But such willingness is inappropriate if I really love Jane and care about her for her own sake.

I do not pretend here to have a full analysis of what it means to care about a person for her own sake. But I think it is fair to say that Zimmerman's account downplays the particularity that it is involved in the appropriate caring for a person for her own sake, and that makes his solution to the distance problem unconvincing.

7. Normative experience

The proposals we have discussed so far all assume that favouring can be equated with a non-evaluative attitude or emotion. But favouring could instead be understood in terms of an emotion with *normative* content. Perhaps such an account can close the gap between what is good and what is fitting to favour. One suggestion would be to say that to favour p is to experience p as fitting to love. This would turn the FA-analysis into the view that the good is what it would be fitting to experience as fitting to love. Whether this is a plausible account hangs on how 'love' is understood.

We cannot identify love with any of Hurka's main forms of love: pursuit, desire, or taking pleasure. If it is not fitting, because impossible, to intentionally bring about there being happy egrets but no agents, then, surely, it cannot be fitting to experience this state of affairs as something that it is fitting to pursue. Similarly, if it is not fitting to desire this state of affairs, then it is also not fitting to experience it as something that it is fitting to desire. Finally, if it is not fitting, because self-undermining, to take pleasure in there being happy egrets but no believers, then it is not fitting to experience it as something that it is fitting to take pleasure in. This last point applies more generally to all belief-entailing emotions. It cannot be fitting to experience this state of affairs as something that it is fitting to have a belief-entailing emotion towards.

Similar reasoning applies to factive emotions. It cannot be fitting to experience there being happy egrets but no factive emotions as some-

thing that it is fitting to have a factive emotion towards, since it is impossible to have a factive emotion towards this state of affairs.

In general, it cannot be fitting to experience *p* as something that it is fitting to love, if it is not fitting to love *p* in the first place. Of course, it can be fitting in an instrumental sense to experience something as fitting to love even though it is not fitting to love it. Perhaps the notorious evil demon will cause horrible suffering if you do not experience him as fitting to love. But, as pointed out before, that something is fittingly experienced in this instrumental sense does not tell us anything about the genuine value of the object.

At this point, a possible response would be to follow Brentano and claim that 'love' should be seen as a primitive concept. Of course, there is no decisive argument for or against seeing love as a primitive, since one philosopher's primitive is another's mystery. But it seems especially unhelpful to assume that 'love' is primitive in a context where love is seen as an emotion directed towards states of affairs. Applying love to states of affairs must be understood metaphorically, since emotional love is properly applied only to individuals. The metaphorical usage therefore calls for a more literal interpretation. Brentano's commentators have tried to rescue Brentano here by saying that what he had in mind was just that we can *feel favourably disposed* towards a state of affairs (Chisholm 1986, p. 18). But feeling favourably disposed does not pick out a unique attitude; it rather demarcates a whole class of different attitudes, including Hurka's three main forms of love. Even if we might be unable to say much about what unifies the attitudes in this class, we have seen that we can say quite a lot about how they differ, in particular, how they differ in their suitability for an FA-account.

Another approach, inspired by Brentano, would be to say that to favour *p* is to take pleasure in *p* and experience taking pleasure in *p* as fitting (Brentano 1889, pp. 18–22). What is good would then be what it would be fitting to take pleasure in while experiencing this pleasure as fitting. Obviously this account will not work if taking pleasure is seen as either belief-entailing or truth-entailing. If it is seen as some emotional feeling that can be directed towards merely imagined non-obtaining states of affairs, we will still encounter the perspectivity problem. How much pleasure it is fitting to feel towards something will vary with the distance between the object and the pleasure-taker even though the value of the object will stay fixed.²⁹

²⁹This assumes of course that what is better should be *favoured more strongly*, something Brentano explicitly rejects. But I have already argued for this assumption in the previous section.

Yet another approach would identify favouring p with experiencing p as something that *ought* to obtain. If we plug this kind of favouring into the FA-account we get:

FA*: p is good =_{df.} p is such that, if one were to contemplate p , it would be fitting to experience p as something that ought to obtain

To see the first problem with this analysis, note that what *in fact* ought to obtain seems to depend crucially on which set of alternatives we have in mind. For instance, there can be two alternatives, each of which is good but only one of which ought to obtain, since it is the better one.³⁰ FA* would imply that it is fitting to experience the lesser good as something that ought to obtain even though it is not true that it ought to obtain. But how can it be fitting (in a non-instrumental sense) to experience it as something that ought to obtain if it is not true that it ought to obtain?

Note also that in some contexts what is bad ought to obtain, since it might be the least bad of all alternatives.³¹ In this context, it seems fitting to experience the least bad as something that ought to obtain. But a proponent of FA* cannot accept this since what is fitting to experience as something that ought to obtain must be good.

Finally, it seems true to say that there ought to be no suffering. It seems also true to say that it is fitting to experience there being no suffering as something that ought to be. But there being no suffering does not seem to be a positively good state of affairs. It is rather the absence of something bad. There being no suffering seems to have neutral value.³²

³⁰ As pointed out by Zimmerman 2001, p. 82.

³¹ Again, as pointed out by Zimmerman 2001, p. 82.

³² My objections here all hinge on the fact that what ought to obtain does not always coincide with what is good. But, as Gustaf Arrhenius pointed out to me, it is possible that what ought to obtain given a specified set of alternatives coincides with what is good. The general idea is (roughly) that p is good if and only if p ought to obtain given that the alternatives are only p and some neutral state of affairs q , and q is neutral if and only if, given that the alternatives are only q and not- q , it is neither the case that q ought to obtain, nor the case that q ought not to obtain. One obvious problem here is of course to guarantee that betterness will be transitive (which seems to be a desirable feature of betterness), since it is not clear that (1) p ought to obtain given p and q and (2) q ought to obtain given q and r implies (3) p ought to obtain given p and r . In any case, even if the equivalence between the good and what ought to obtain given an alternative set can be established, defining 'p is good' as 'it is fitting to experience p as something that ought to obtain given that the alternatives are only p and something neutral' seems to be of doubtful value, since it is not clear that there are normative experiences of such complexity, and, even if there are such experiences, it seems more appropriate to define 'p is good' more directly as 'p ought to obtain given that the alternatives are only p and something neutral'.

I think these objections can be generalized to FA-accounts that identify favouring p with experiencing p as something *to be*. Following Goldman, this experience can be seen as some sort of mental ‘assent’ of an optative proposition ‘Let it be the case that p ’ (Goldman 1970, pp. 101–2). But whether it is fitting to assent in your heart to ‘Let it be the case that p ’ seems again to depend on what alternatives to p there are. Also, it seems fitting to assent to ‘Let it be the case that there is no suffering’ even though there being no suffering is neutral, not good.

8. Comparability

The last problem I am going to touch upon has to do with the fact that different kinds of states of affairs seem to merit different kinds of favouring. For instance, it seems fitting to take pleasure in someone’s feeling innocent bodily pleasure but not fitting to take pleasure in someone’s heroic but extremely painful self-sacrifice. The fitting attitude towards heroic self-sacrifice is admiration, not pleasure.³³ But admiration is not a fitting attitude to take towards bodily pleasure. The problem now is how we should understand the claim that self-sacrifice is better than innocent bodily pleasure. If what is better should be favoured more strongly, we seem to be forced to say that it is fitting that the degree of admiration one feels towards the heroic self-sacrifice is greater than the degree of pleasure one takes in the bodily pleasure. But is it clear that it makes sense to compare degrees of such radically different attitudes? It will not do to say that it is impossible to compare the values of these states of affairs, for whether this is impossible is a substantial question which should be left open by a plausible conceptual analysis of value. A simple hedonist, for instance, would claim—perfectly coherently, it seems—that bodily pleasure is better than painful self-sacrifice.

A similar problem occurs when one wants to find a suitable attitude towards the good whole consisting of the heroic self-sacrifice and the bodily pleasure. It is fitting to admire one part and take pleasure in

³³ Some would argue that this example is not convincing because admiration is an attitude we take towards persons, not states of affairs. But linguistic evidence suggests that this cannot be the whole truth, for we do say things such as ‘I admire his braveness’ (property), ‘I admire his heroic act’ (act), and ‘I admire his doing the heroic act’ (state of affairs). It might be true that admiration is primarily an attitude towards persons and only derivatively an attitude towards states of affairs and things of other ontological categories. But this is something I can happily concede. I agree that it sounds odd to say that we admire states of affairs. But it should be noted that a similar oddity occurs in the case of other propositional attitudes. For instance, it sounds odd to say that I fear a proposition, even though fear can take propositions as objects, as when I fear *that the spider will attack me*.

another, but what attitude should we take towards the whole? Some third attitude that is a bit like pleasure-taking and a bit like admiration? But it is doubtful whether there is such a Janus-faced attitude. It is not enough to say that this attitude only needs to be another pro-attitude, since pro-attitudes come in radically different flavours and we want to know exactly which flavour of favour is appropriate in this context. Again, it will not do to say that the whole cannot have any value, for whether it has value is a substantial question that no conceptual analysis of value should settle.

9. Conclusions

This ends my attempt to find a form of favouring that would be suitable for a non-circular FA-analysis of value. I have looked at proposals that define what is good in terms of what it is fitting to

- (1) merely pursue
- (2) successfully pursue
- (3) be disposed to choose or pursue
- (4) take belief-entailing pleasure in
- (5) take truth-entailing pleasure in
- (6) have a truth-entailing positive emotion towards
- (7) have a belief-entailing positive emotion towards
- (8) have an imaginary positive feeling towards
- (9) experience as fitting to love
- (10) take pleasure in while experiencing this pleasure as fitting
- (11) experience as something that ought to obtain, or
- (12) experience as something to be (mentally assent to)

I have shown that an FA-account would face serious problems if it invoked any of these favourings. Defining the good in terms of the truth- or belief-entailing favourings (1) to (7) will lead to problems with 'solitary' goods. Defining the good in terms of (8), which is neither truth-, nor belief-entailing, will lead to the distance problem. Finally, defining the good in terms of the normative favourings, (9), (10), (11),

and (12), will not give us an improved FA-account, since it will inherit many of the problems that applied to the preceding definitions.

These problems would disappear if favouring were seen as an evaluative judgement. The problems about finding a fitting attitude towards 'solitary' good states of affairs that entail that there are no contemplators, agents, believers, pleasure-takers, or favourers would be avoided, since judging p as something that would be good does not imply that one believes that p obtains, nor does it imply that p obtains.

The distance problem can also be solved since whether it is fitting to judge p as good does not depend on one's distance from p . This is not to deny that what it is fitting to *experience as good* can depend on one's distance from the experienced state of affairs. Perhaps remote possibilities that are very good do not require one to experience them as very good even though one should still judge them as very good.

Finally, the last problem about comparing different kinds of states of affairs is avoided, since even if different kinds of goods call for different kinds of emotional reactions, it is still true that what is better could fittingly be judged as better, and that a whole consisting of different kinds of goods could fittingly be judged as good.

Not everything is rosy, of course, since we would have to accept the following circular account of goodness:

p is good =_{df.} p is such that it would be fitting to judge p as good,
if one were to contemplate p

How damaging this is for the FA-analysis is another story.³⁴ It would be damaging if the analysis is supposed to provide a reductive account of value. If the concept of goodness is covertly contained in the analysans of the FA-analysis, then the analysis cannot be said to *reduce* axiological concepts to natural and deontic concepts. In any case, since the list of favourings above seems pretty exhaustive, the prospects of finding a plausible non-circular account of the FA-analysis look bleak. Conceptual circularity seems to be something an FA-proponent will have to learn to live with.³⁵

³⁴ For more on this see Svensson 2004, p. 282.

³⁵ An ancestor of this paper was presented at the SPAWN workshop on value in Syracuse, July 16–18, 2006. For useful comments, I would like to thank the participants of this workshop, in particular, Gustaf Arrhenius, Ben Bradley, Ruth Chang, Earl Conee, James Dreier, Fred Feldman, Chris Heathwood, Rae Langton, Noah Lemos, Jonas Olson, Wlodek Rabinowicz, Michael Smith, and Michael Zimmerman. I would also like to thank Anandi Hattiangadi, Tom Hurka, Erik Carlson, and Roger Crisp for sending me very useful written comments on an earlier draft.

Jesus College
Turl Street
Oxford, OX1 3DW
UK
kriste.bykvist@jesus.ox.ac.uk

KRISTER BYKVIST

References

- Brentano, Franz 1969: *The Origin of our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, trans. R. Chisholm and E. Schneewind. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Originally published in German as *Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis*, Leipzig: Dunker & Humblot, 1889.
- Broad, Charlie Dunbar 1930: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Chisholm, Roderick 1964: 'The Descriptive Element in The Concept of Action'. *Journal of Philosophy*, 61, pp. 613–25.
- 1981: 'Defining Intrinsic Value'. *Analysis*, 41, pp. 99–100.
- 1986: *Brentano and Intrinsic Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crisp, Roger 2000: 'Value ... And What Follows. By Joel Kupperman'. Book review in *Philosophy*, 75, pp. 458–62.
- D'Arms, Justin and Daniel Jacobson 2000: 'Sentiment and Value'. *Ethics*, 110, pp. 722–48.
- Davis, Wayne 1981: 'Pleasure and Happiness'. *Philosophical Studies*, 39, pp. 305–17.
- Ewing, Alfred Cyril 1939: 'A Suggested Non-Naturalistic Analysis of Good'. *Mind*, 48, pp. 1–22.
- 1947: *The Definition of Good*. London: MacMillan.
- 1959: *Second Thoughts in Moral Philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Fehige, Cristoph, and Ulla Wessels (eds) 1998: *Preferences: Perspectives in Analytical Philosophy*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Feldman, Fred 2004: *Pleasure and The Good Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gibbard, Allan 1990: *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 1998: 'Preference and Preferability'. In Fehige and Wessels 1998, pp. 239–59.
- Goldie, Peter 2000: *The Emotions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goldman, Alvin 1970: *A Theory of Human Action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Gordon, Robert 1974: 'The Aboutness of Emotions'. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 11, pp. 27–36.
- Greenspan, Patricia 1988: *Emotions and Reasons: An Inquiry into Emotional Justification*. New York: Routledge.
- Honderich, Ted (ed.) 1985: *Morality and Objectivity*. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hurka, Tom 2001: *Virtue, Vice, and Value*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 2003: 'Moore in the Middle'. *Ethics*, 113, pp. 599–628.
- Lemos, Noah 1994: *Intrinsic Value. Concept and Warrant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McDowell, John 1985: 'Values and Secondary Qualities'. In Honderich 1985, pp. 110–29.
- Mulligan, Kevin 1998: 'From Appropriate Emotions to Values'. *The Monist*, 81, pp. 161–88.
- Oddie, Graham 2005: *Value, Reality, and Desire*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Olson, Jonas 2004: 'Buck-Passing and The Wrong Kind of Reasons'. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 54, pp. 295–300.
- Olson, Jonas and Sven Danielsson 2007: 'Brentano and the Buck-Passers'. *Mind*, 116, pp. 511–22.
- Pettit, Philip 1998: 'Desire', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig. London: Routledge. Retrieved May 30, 2006, from <<http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/V009>>.
- Rabinowicz, Wlodek and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004: 'The Strike of The Demon. On Fitting Pro-Attitudes and Value'. *Ethics*, 114, pp. 391–423.
- (eds) 2004: *Patterns of Value. Essays on Formal Axiology and Value Analysis*. Lund Philosophy Reports 2004:1.
- Scanlon, Thomas 1998: *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schick, Frederic 2003: *Ambiguity and Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Svensson, Daniel 2004: 'The Softhearted but Hardheaded Challenge: Sentimentalism, Emotive Cognitivism and the Circularity Problem', in Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004, pp. 261–89.
- Wiggins, David 1987: 'A Sensible Subjectivism?', in his *Needs, Values, Truth: Essays in the philosophy of value*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 185–214.
- Zimmerman, Michael 2001: *The Nature of Intrinsic Value*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.