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### Book section

**Original citation:**

Originally published in Rabinowicz, Wlodek and Ronnow-Rasmussen, Toni (2015) *Value taxonomy*. In: Brosch, Tobias and Sander, David, (eds.) *Handbook of Value: Perspectives from Economics, Neuroscience, Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, pp. 23-42. ISBN 9780198716600

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Available in LSE Research Online: June 2016

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Published in T. Brosch and D. Sander (eds.), *The Handbook of Value: The Affective Sciences of Values and Valuation*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2015, 23-42.

## **Value Taxonomy**

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This research was supported by grants from the Swedish Research Council.

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### Abstract

The paper presents main conceptual distinctions underlying much of modern philosophical thinking about value. The introductory Section 1 is followed in Section 2 by an outline of the contrast between non-relational value (impersonal good, or good, period) and relational value (good for someone, or—more generally—good for some entity). In Section 3, the focus is on the distinction between final and non-final value as well as on different kinds of final value. In Section 4, we consider value relations, such as being better/worse/equally good/on a par. Recent discussions suggest that we might need to considerably extend traditional taxonomies of value relations.

*Keywords:* Good, Good for, Final value, intrinsic value, .....

## Value Taxonomy: Introduction

Classical taxonomies, such as Linnaeus's classification of plants or Mendeleev's periodic table of elements, help us to structure reality into fundamental types—be they types of plants or atoms. But a value taxonomy is not necessarily about entities understood in a realistic sense. Value taxonomies need not take a stand on the realism/irrealism issue. In many contexts, what is of interest is not so much what is the case but what is believed to be the case. In empirical studies, such as for example the European Values Study and the World Values Survey, the focus tends to be on what people implicitly or explicitly believe to be valuable, or on what they like or prefer. Studies of this kind endeavor to supply social scientists and policy makers with data about people's preferences and views about what they believe to be significant (in their lives or more generally). While such studies are of great interest, we shall in what follows focus on other matters: Our target is conceptual analysis.

Circumventing metaphysical issues and setting empirical studies aside does not lead to arbitrariness about value taxonomy. In what follows we outline the core conceptual distinctions that underlie much of modern philosophical thinking about value. After some introductory remarks, we address in Section 2 the relation between value and value-for—an issue that is attracting increasing attention in contemporary philosophical value theory. To put it differently, this issue concerns the distinction between what is good (impersonally good, or good, period) and what is good for someone, or—more generally—good for some entity. The divide between these two value notions shapes much of modern ethics.

The notion of good, period, has over the years been subjected to many analyses, above all when it is understood to be a gloss on what is *good in itself* or *good for its own sake* (in contrast to what is good for the sake of something else). Section 3 focuses on some novel analyses of these concepts, which have attracted considerable attention. In this section we also briefly consider such notions as unconditional and non-derivative value. Finally, in Section 4,

we will have a look at comparative values, or—to put it differently—at value relations (such as being better/worse/equally good/on a par). Recent discussions suggest that we might have to considerably extend traditional taxonomies of value relations.

First, however, some introductory remarks are in order. Our focus is on conceptual distinctions between value types. But a value taxonomy might also be substantive. That is, it might distinguish between different types of objects that are thought to possess value (for their own sake). There is a need for such a classification if one's substantive theory of value is of a pluralistic kind. Since Parfit (1984, 493-502), it is customary to distinguish between three main kinds of substantive views about value. The first two are monistic: Hedonism identifies what's good (or good-for) with a positive balance of pleasure over pain,<sup>1</sup> while desire theories identify value with the satisfaction of desires.<sup>2</sup> The third kind of substantive theory is

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<sup>1</sup> However, even a hedonist might see the need for a substantive value taxonomy if he takes the view that different pleasures may carry essentially different values. In his *Utilitarianism*, J.S. Mill famously distinguished between higher pleasures (coming from such noble pursuits as poetry or philosophical contemplation) and lower pleasures (of sensual nature). Not surprisingly, he suggested that the former are radically superior to the latter.

<sup>2</sup> Desire theories admit of two fundamentally different versions (see Rabinowicz and Österberg 1996). On the 'satisfaction' version, what is of value is the satisfaction of our desires. On the 'object' version, the value accrues to what is being desired. The objects we desire can be heterogeneous in nature, which allows for a pluralistic substantive theory of value. It is only the satisfaction version that can naturally be seen as a monistic value theory. Note that the object version can easily be generalized: On that view value might be ascribed not only to the objects of desire, but also to the objects of other kinds of pro-attitudes. This opens for value pluralism on the ontological, and not merely substantive, level: While it is arguable that the objects of desire must be states of affairs, this restriction to states of affairs

explicitly pluralistic: It is the so-called objective list view, which ascribes value to a variety of different types of things (e.g. to friendship, love, freedom, etc.) Such a list may, but need not, include pleasure or desire-satisfaction.<sup>3</sup>

This is not the place to survey the substantive accounts. Let us instead provide some examples of what we mean by value claims:

- (1) Pleasure is good and pain is bad; (2) Drugs are not good for you; (3) This painting by Titian is beautiful; (4) Rescuing the girl was a courageous thing to do; (5) Mozart was a better composer than Salieri; (6) John is a good philosopher.

(1) mentions a positive and a negative general value; (2) refers to a relational value, “good-for”; (3) is about an aesthetic value; (4) mentions a specific value property; (5) states a value relation, and (6) is an example of an ‘attributive’ use of value predicates, as opposed to their ‘predicative’ usage in such statements as (1), for example. In the attributive usage, ‘good’ is a category modifier (“a good philosopher”, “a good knife”, etc), while in the predicative usage, it stands on its own. Sometimes it is unclear from the surface grammar how a given term is being used. Compare “x is a grey building” with (6). Unlike the former sentence, (6) cannot be read conjunctively: That x is a grey building means that x is grey and that it is a building. Thus, “grey” is used predicatively in this context. But that John is a good philosopher does

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as the only bearers of value disappears if one ascribes value to the objects of other pro-attitudes as well.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes the items on the ‘objective list’ are themselves called values, but we prefer a different terminology, according to which these items *possess* value, or *are* valuable. The former use would make anti-realism about value an utterly implausible position. Surely, it is uncontroversial that there are such things as friendship, love or pleasure. What is questioned by the anti-realist is whether there exists any value property that these things, or anything else for that matter, can possess.

not entail that John is good. “Good” here modifies “a philosopher”, instead of standing on its own.

That statements like (1) – (6) make evaluative claims is a view deeply rooted in a loose set of ideas about how such judgments differ from (purely) descriptive claims such as e.g. ‘pleasure is a mental state’; ‘some people are addicted to drugs’; ‘this painting weighs 5 kilograms’. But value claims should also be distinguished from the so-called deontic statements, such as “You ought to keep your promises”, or “We must come to her rescue.” While both the deontic and the evaluative statements are contrasted with the descriptive ones, there is ‘prescriptivity’ and an action-guidingness in the area of the deontic<sup>4</sup> that is at least not explicitly present in the area of the evaluative. Whether the prescriptive aspect is implicit in the latter is a matter of controversy. On the so-called fitting-attitude analysis of value (FA-analysis), which has recently been much discussed, an object is valuable if and only if it is fitting (appropriate, warranted, required, ...) to favour it. Here, “fitting” stands for the normative component in the analysis, while “favour” is a place-holder for a pro-attitude.<sup>5</sup> Thus, on this analysis, value judgments are plausibly interpretable as being implicitly prescriptive.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> To be sure, not only prescriptions, but also permissions belong to the deontic area. However, one might argue that they do so simply because they are denials of prescriptions.

<sup>5</sup> Depending on the nature of the fitting pro-attitude (desire, preference, admiration, respect, care, etc, ...) we get different kinds of value (desirability, preferability, admirability, and so on).

<sup>6</sup> On a version of FA-analysis that is due to Scanlon (1998), for an object to be good or valuable is for it to have properties that provide reasons to respond to it in various positive ways. On this account, it is the notion of a reason that is the deontic component in the analysis. Since the role of the reason-provider is here transferred from the value of the object

The above list of value claims may also serve as an illustration of certain issues in value theory that have bearing on value taxonomies. ‘Good’ and ‘bad’ seem to be predicates that are quite different from, say, ‘beautiful’ or ‘courageous’. To judge something to be good offers much less (if any) specific information about that thing than if we had judged it to be beautiful or if we had judged someone to be courageous. ‘Good’ and ‘bad’ have been referred to as *thin concepts* because of their lack of descriptive content; more specific value concepts have accordingly been called *thick* (Williams 1985, 140-43). The nature of this distinction between thick and thin evaluative concepts is a much debated matter.<sup>7</sup> In what follows, the focus will be on the thin value notions rather than on the thick ones. Our taxonomical suggestions are thus meant to primarily apply to the former, but some of them might also apply to the latter.

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to other properties (the ones that make the object valuable), this version of the analysis has been called “the buck-passing account of value”.

<sup>7</sup> See Kirchin (2013). Mulligan (2010) contains the following list of thick value categories:

“There are the *aesthetic* properties of being beautiful, elegant, or sublime. There are the *cognitive* value-properties of which clarity, distinctness, illusion, error, knowledge, truth and falsity are the bearers and the property of being foolish. There are the *ethical* properties of being evil and good, and the properties corresponding to different ethical virtues and vices, for example, the property of being a coward. There are the properties of being right, just and unjust. There are the *religious* properties of being holy or sacred and profane. There are the *vital* value-properties of which health, life, and illness are the bearers. And the *sensory* value-properties of being pleasant and unpleasant.” Whether all the items on Mulligan’s list are thick value properties can, of course, be discussed. Some of them might instead be classified as value-making features (truth, pleasantness), while some others seem to be thin rather than thick (rightness).



Thus, in particular, although values sometimes are ordered into domains such as moral, aesthetic, prudential, political, economic—to mention some of the most common ones—in this paper we shall focus on the conceptual distinctions that can be made independently of which of the areas of value one is interested in.

In an influential paper, Geach (1956) argued that predicative uses of ‘good’ do not make sense, unlike its attributive uses. The apparent predicative uses, of the form “*a* is good”, are on this view incomplete expressions that need to be filled out with a specification of the appropriate object category to which *a* is supposed to belong and within which it is taken to be an exemplary specimen. Thus, “John is good” is short for “John is a good man [or “a good person”?]”, “Tour d’Eiffel is majestic” is short for “Tour d’Eiffel is a majestic building [or “a majestic tower”?]”, and so on.<sup>8</sup> This all-encompassing attributivism about “good” is a controversial position. Many value theorists accept it, but at least as many reject it. It might also turn out that an acceptable form of attributivism will have to be so diluted that it will no longer clearly differ from predicativism. If one takes statements such as, say, “that *p* is the case is good/bad”, which ascribe goodness or badness to states of affairs, as being elliptic for attributive statements of the form “that *p* is the case is a good/bad state of affairs”, then predicativists might have no problems with accepting such attributive re-descriptions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Other philosophers sympathetic to this idea have in important ways nuanced the Geachian view. See e.g. Thomson (1992) who argues that if something is good it is always good “in a way” (but not necessarily, as Geach thought, good of its kind, which is a special form of being good in a way).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Schroeder (2012). Geach would have claimed that categories such as “state of affairs”, “event”, “thing”, etc. are too general to play the role of category-fillers in value statements: They do not provide standards that allow us to identify their exemplary representatives. Cf.

## 2. Good and Good-for

In his seminal *Methods of Ethics* (1874, 7th ed. 1907), Henry Sidgwick argued at length that as rational agents we face a choice: we can do what (we believe) is good for us or we can do what (we believe) is good *per se*, i.e., what is impersonally good or as we shall also say, good, period. This choice becomes an acute problem when maximizing the good does not maximize the good for the agent. The insight that practical rationality must choose between securing what is impersonally good (acting morally) or making sure you get what is good for you (acting in your own interest) was something Sidgwick believed distinguished modern ethics from the ethics of ancient Greeks (cf. Crisp 2004, 106). By understanding what is good in terms of what is good for the agent, Greek philosophy failed in his view to properly appreciate the nature of this problem, and so it did not grasp the “dualism of practical reason”: the existence of two independent ultimate objectives that we have reasons to strive for. Whether Sidgwick was right in his claims about ancient Greek philosophy is a debated matter (for a criticism, see e.g. Brewer 2009, 200). That modern ethics turns around this divide is clear.<sup>10 11</sup>

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Geach (1956). See also Thomson (2008) who explicitly rules out states of affairs from what she refers to as “goodness fixing kinds”.

<sup>10</sup> See Crisp (2004, 112), who points out that Sidgwick’s own analyses of good-for and good, period, were versions of the FA-analysis. Thus, according to Sidgwick, the “ultimate good on the whole for me” is “what I should practically desire if my desires were in harmony with reason, assuming my own existence alone to be considered” (Sidgwick 1907, 112). We get the analysis of good, period, if we remove the last clause in this definition.

<sup>11</sup> Often, when we try to clarify what we have in mind when we speak about what is good for someone, we say that it is a component of a person’s wellbeing, or that it is something that

One early objection against the notion of good period was based on the objectivist idea that goodness can accrue to objects independently of the attitudes of the subjects, which is a highly questionable view.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, a value objectivist might be tempted by a converse objection that we should give up on ‘good for’ since *that* notion presupposes the subjectivist conception of value.

Such a polarization of the two concepts of goodness appears misconceived, however. In recent years, there have emerged suggestions about how to understand the subjectivism/objectivism distinction in a way that implies that both notions, good period and good-for, are available to subjectivist and to objectivist approaches alike (Rabinowicz and Österberg 1996, Rønnow-Rasmussen 2011). The subjectivist idea that value is dependent on

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benefits the person, or makes his or her life go better. One might agree with such paraphrases but still wonder how “wellbeing”, “better life” or “benefit” should be understood. As Richard Kraut has pointed out, saying that what is *good for* someone consists in it “being beneficial, advantageous, and so on” is not really helpful; the latter expressions “are not conceptually prior to and explanatory of the relation of being good for someone” (Kraut 2011, 69).

Sometimes “good for” refers not to an element in a person’s wellbeing but to what promotes the latter. In this usage, “good for” refers to an instrumental value, i.e., value as a means for something else (Bradley 2013, Rønnow-Rasmussen 2006). We shall return to the distinction between instrumental and final (non-instrumental) value in Section 3. But here it is important to keep in mind that the ongoing debate about good *vs.* good-for primarily concerns the issue whether there are one or two kinds of non-instrumental goodness (Cf. Kraut 2011; Rønnow-Rasmussen 2011, Rosati 2008, 2009, Zimmerman 2009).

<sup>12</sup> See Hobbes, who in some places gives voice to this sort of objection: “*one cannot speak of something as being simply good; since whatsoever is good, is good for someone or other*” (*De Homine*. XI. 4, 47).

the attitudes of a subject is not to be understood as an account of goodness-for but rather as a claim that all goodness is *goodness-relative-to* a subject. But that notion should not be confused with the notion of good-for. Thus, to illustrate, some of the things that are good-relative-to x, i.e. things that are objects of x's pro-attitudes, need not be good *for* x—they need not be conducive to x's wellbeing in any way. (cf. Schroeder 2007; Smith 2003)

G. E. Moore's response in his major work *Principia Ethica* (1903) to the dualism problem highlighted by Sidgwick was different, but equally radical. Moore's Gordian cut consisted in the argument that the very notion of someone's good was nonsensical if it referred to a sort of private goodness, a positive value property that somehow was the subject's possession (which he believed egoism assumed):

What then is meant by "my own good"? In what sense can a thing be *good for me*? It is obvious, if we reflect, that the only thing which can belong to me, which can be mine, is something which is good, and not the fact that it is good (1903, 150).

Moore's discussion paved the way for a position in contemporary value theory which reduces good-for to what is good period. Let us refer to such a reductive view as moorean monism. Moore's own, positive suggestion was that "When ... I talk of anything I get as my own good, I must mean either that the thing I get is good, or that my possessing it is good. In both cases it is only the thing or the possession of it which is *mine*, and not *the goodness* of that thing or that possession." (Moore 1903, 150). Moorean monists often suggest that claims about what is good for someone are claims to the effect that some fact involving the person whose good we are considering, is good period. Of course, not all versions of moorean monism are inspired by Moore. Consider the so-called perfectionist views that understand what is good for a person in terms of what contributes to the excellence of that person or to the flourishing of the person's life. Such views do not directly take a stand on the 'good period/good for' issue.

However, they can be seen as forms of moorean monism: A dyadic predicate—‘good for’—is analyzed in terms of a monadic one: ‘excellence’, or ‘flourishing’ (both of which may be regarded as species of goodness period).<sup>13</sup>

In recent years, there have been various attempts to formulate or further develop versions of moorean monism (e.g., Campbell 2013, Fletcher 2012, Regan 2004, Hurka 1998).<sup>14</sup>

However, this view is challenged by an influential alternative line of thought which argues that moorean monists get it fundamentally wrong: it is good-for, rather than good period, that is conceptually prior. In other words, it is good period that should be analyzed in terms of good-for—either good for some (group of) subject(s) (Thomson 1992) or perhaps for “man”

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<sup>13</sup> There is another and perhaps historically more adequate way of looking at perfectionist proposals, though. If the gist of such proposals is that what is good for an agent is what contributes to his having a *good life* or to him being an excellent person, then this kind of analysis seems to reduce good-for to an attributive usage of “good”, in which that predicate does not stand on its own.

<sup>14</sup> Cf., for instance, the so-called Locative Analysis of good in Fletcher (2012): “G is non-instrumentally good for X if and only if (i) G is non-instrumentally good, (ii) G has properties that generate, or would generate, agent-relative reasons for X to hold pro-attitudes towards G for its own sake, (iii) G is essentially related to X” (p. 3). This is a straightforward example of how what is non-instrumentally good for someone is reduced to what is non-instrumentally good. Campbell (2013:1) proposes a revisionist analysis of what is good for you in terms of what is “contributing to the appeal or desirability of being in your position”. Hurka thinks that “‘good for’ is fundamentally confused, and should be banished from moral philosophy. The problem is not that the expression can be given no clear sense. It can, indeed, be given too many senses, none of which is best expressed by ‘good for’.” (Hurka 1998, 72) The senses listed by Hurka are either purely descriptive or rely on the impersonal concept of ‘good’.

in general (see Campbell 1935)—and not the other way round. The idea of, say, beauty or knowledge being good quite independent of whether they are good for anyone, as for instance Moore thought, is rejected by the proponents of this view, for various reasons.<sup>15</sup>

Being a moorean monist or a good-for monist are obviously the radical options. The dualist view, according to which there is room for both good period and good-for as mutually irreducible notions, has many defenders (see e.g. Darwall 2002, Rønnow-Rasmussen 2011).<sup>16</sup>

In light of the discussion between monists and dualists, the value taxonomist faces a challenge that presently is unresolved: should there be one or two value taxonomies? That is, must our value taxonomy branch out into two distinct directions—one concerning good period and another concerning good-for?

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<sup>15</sup> (Kraut 2011) has argued for a different, but related view. According to him, good period is not a reason-giving property, contrary to good-for. On this account, then, good period has no normative role to play in our deliberation about what to do. (Kraut 2011:8).

<sup>16</sup> Michael Smith points out that “commonsense morality seems to tell us that our obligations are a function of the relative weights of both the neutral and the relative values at stake in a particular choice situation” (Smith 2003, 577). However, if some goods are neutral à la Moore and others are relative, then the two kinds of value, Smith argues, are incommensurable, and hence, commonsense morality is incoherent in believing that there is a weighing function. But Smith also considers another interpretation of commonsense morality, according to which there “is only one kind of goodness—there is only subscripted [i.e. relational] goodness—and the distinction between neutral and relative goods is made by distinguishing between the properties *in virtue of which things are good*” (p. 588; italics added). This view might be seen as a species of a good-for monism, but only if one interprets Smith’s “subscripted goodness” as goodness-for, which by no means is obvious. On another interpretation, subscripted goodness is goodness-relative-to; see above for the latter concept.

### 3. Final and non-final values.

Let us now turn to another demarcation line within value theory, namely the distinction between what is intrinsically good, i.e. good in itself, and what is finally good, i.e. good for its own sake. In what follows, we focus on how this distinction is drawn within the area of good period, rather than in the area of good-for. However, the pattern of analysis we are going to employ to deal with the distinction can also be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, in the latter area.

In the *Republic*, Plato distinguished between three kinds of goods: (i) goods that we desire for their own sake, (ii) goods that we desire both for their own sake and for the sake of their consequences, and finally (iii) goods that we desire only for their consequences.<sup>17</sup> To put it somewhat anachronistically, then, Plato's taxonomy turns on the notions of 'good for its own sake' and 'good for the sake of something else'. It should be noted, however, that for Plato things are good for their own sake in virtue of the direct benefits they bring to their possessor (ibid., 367 b-e). His examples of such things include sight, hearing, intelligence and health, along with justice and enjoyment. His distinction thus concerns things that are *good-for* a person.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Plato (1992:357b-c). *Republic* are from G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve's translation (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co).

<sup>18</sup>It is arguable that Plato considered these things to be good period, though at the same time localized to a given person (see Brewer 2009, 200). Thus, they are good-for in a Moorean sense, so to speak. It should also be noted that Plato's distinction differs from the modern one: For him, we desire something for its own sake if it directly benefits us, whether it is a constituent of our final good (as is the case with virtue) or one of its direct partial causes

Much of the recent debate revolves around an approach to final value that goes back to G. E. Moore. For Moore (1922, 260), the ultimate value was “intrinsic” and he took an object to be intrinsically valuable insofar as its value was grounded in its “intrinsic nature”. The properties that together form the intrinsic nature of an object are internal to the object in question. In addition, they are necessary to that object (ibid. pp. 260f). Moore was probably led to this requirement of necessity by his belief that things that are good in themselves are good independently of circumstances. Since circumstances can affect contingent properties of an object, the object’s intrinsic value can only depend on those of its properties that aren’t contingent. In post-Moorean discussions, however, this necessity requirement was often relinquished. On this later view, it is possible for the intrinsic value of an object to be grounded in some of its contingent properties, as long as these properties are internal to the object in question. Thus, for example, an intrinsically valuable life might derive its value from some of its experiential components, which it might not have contained if the circumstances had been different. (We will have reason to return to the necessity requirement in what follows, when we consider Kant’s idea of unconditional value.)

Moore assumed that nothing can be good for its own sake unless it is intrinsically good, good ‘in itself’. But he questioned the converse: Thus, in *Ethics* (1965 [1912], 30-32), he suggested that an object is good for its own sake only if all of its parts are intrinsically good. If only some part of the object is intrinsically good, then this can often make the object as a whole intrinsically good, but then this object is good for the sake of its part and not for its own sake. This Moorean restriction on the use of “good for its own sake” has, however, not been followed in the later debates.

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(sight, intelligence). In the latter case, a modern philosopher would say that we are talking about goodness as a (direct) means rather than goodness for its own sake.



Several philosophers (e.g. Beardsley 1965, Korsgaard 1983, Kagan 1998; O'Neill 1992; Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000) have argued for the possibility that Moore excluded: what is finally valuable need not always be intrinsically valuable in the Moorean sense. Something can be valuable for its own sake in virtue of an external property it possesses—in virtue of its relation to some external object or objects. Thus, for example, a pen that was used by Abraham Lincoln might be valued for its own sake precisely because of its connection to a famous person (Kagan 1992). Or, an object might be valuable for its own sake partly in virtue of its rarity or uniqueness (Beardsley 1965). This means that final value might in some cases be extrinsic rather than intrinsic.

Korsgaard's distinction between final intrinsic and final extrinsic goodness turns on whether the "source of goodness" is located in or outside the valuable object. The term 'source', however, is ambiguous; it might refer to the value-making features of the object (the "supervenience base" of value), or to the subject (or some other "source") that constructs value—that bestows or projects the value onto the object. It has been questioned whether drawing the distinction in terms of the source of value is felicitous (Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, Dancy 2004; Hussein and Shah 2006; Tannenbaum 2010. Cf. Langton 2007). In particular, the second interpretation of the notion of the source appears to be irrelevant to the issue at hand. One doesn't need to be a subjectivist or a constructivist about value in order to recognize the existence of final extrinsic values.

The words "final" and "sake" call for caution. They can be understood in different ways. In this article, the expressions "valuable for its own sake" and "final value" are used to make clear that the value we are talking about is not one that accrues to some  $x$  in virtue of  $x$  being conducive to or being necessary for something else that is of value. On this interpretation, values are 'final' in the sense of being 'ultimate'. This has an advantage over an interpretation according to which final value is equated with value as an end (for that usage, see e.g.,

Tannenbaum 2010). The advantage is that the former interpretation gives the notion of final value a broader reach: It allows (but of course does not necessitate) ascriptions of such value to a broad range of different kinds of things (pens, stamps, persons, etc.), and not only to objects that can be ends or objectives (i.e. not only to states of affairs and the like).

Objects that are valuable for their own sake are standardly contrasted with instrumentally valuable things, i.e., objects that are valuable as means to something else that is valuable. Instrumentally valuable items are examples of things that are valuable *for the sake of something else* and not necessarily for their own sake. Note, however, that value for the sake of something else (i.e. non-final value) is a broad category. In particular, it also comprises so-called contributive values. An object is contributively valuable if it has value as a part—if it is a constituent of something that is made more valuable than it would otherwise had been by the presence of this constituent.

The notions of instrumental value or contributive value are to some extent problematic. For instance, it is not clear that a means to something valuable is a genuine value in the first place. (c.f. Moore 1903, 24; Lewis 1946, 384–5; Rønnow-Rasmussen 2002).<sup>19</sup> In fact, FA-analysis allows for for making a distinction between a mere means to something valuable and a genuine instrumental value: The latter accrues to an object if and only if it is fitting to favour that object on account of it being a means to something else. Contrast this with the FA-definition of final value: such value accrues to an object if and only it is fitting to favour it for its own sake.

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<sup>19</sup> As far as we understand, Moore denied this. For him, being instrumentally good was simply being a means to something good and not being good in virtue of being such a means. He took an analogous view of contributive value: “To have value merely as a part is equivalent to having no value at all, but merely being a part of that which has it.” (Moore 1903:35)

Note that, given these definitions, the existence of instrumental value does not automatically imply the existence of final values. But a value theory that allows the former without postulating the latter would be very strange indeed.

Some further important value notions should next be considered. Sometimes certain values are described as being unconditional. A value is conditional if it accrues to an object only if a certain condition is satisfied. An unconditional value is a value something has under all possible conditions. Thus, Kant in the *Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals* famously argued that good will is the only unconditional value. There is an extensive amount of scholarly work on Kant's ideas about the good will and his related claim that persons are "ends in themselves". It has been pointed out (Bradley 2006) that while mooreans stress that value is something that should be promoted, it is for kantians something that requires respect. Arguably, this contrast—which goes back to Pettit (1989)—is somewhat oversimplified. Although respect is supposed to be the core response towards good will, even for Kant promoting good will was an important goal, as may be seen from the role he gave to moral education. The idea that different kinds of value call for different kinds of appropriate responses is well in line with FA-analysis of value. This suggests that there might be a way to combine moorean and kantian values within the confines of the same value theory.

The notion of unconditional value appears to be easily interpretable in terms of final value. It seems to be a certain kind of final value, namely final value that accrues to an object in virtue of the latter's essential features. Thus, for instance, hedonism is often characterized as a view on which only pleasure carries this kind of final value. In whatever context we find pleasure, it will be valuable for its own sake in virtue of its nature. That is, it is unconditionally valuable on the hedonist view. Note that pleasure is not only finally but also intrinsically valuable. It is an open question whether there could exist an extrinsic final value that is unconditional: This would require that the extrinsic properties on which such a value is

based are essential to the value bearer. Whether this is possible might well be disputed. A related but different distinction is the one between derivative and non-derivative values. Objects carrying derivative value are described as owing their value to the value of something else. Instrumental values are sometimes described in this way: “An instrumentally valuable object owes its value to the final value of whatever it is a means to.” (Olson 2005, 45; as we have seen above, this is not the only way of understanding instrumental values) However, even final values might be derivative. An example would be a diamond ring that possesses a final value (an intrinsic one) which exclusively derives from the value of its diamond. Also, many sentimental or personal values might be of this kind. An otherwise useless item might carry an engraving made by your beloved spouse, making it valuable to you (cf. Rønnow-Rasmussen 2011). Thus, the distinction between non-derivative and derivative is orthogonal to the distinction between final and non-final.

### 5. Value relations<sup>20</sup>

This section deals with value relations. It is a subject that has only recently received serious attention. There is therefore a relatively limited literature dealing with these matters and many contributions tend to be fairly technical.

Let us say that two items are *commensurable* if one is better, worse or equally as good as the other. In several publications, Ruth Chang has argued that two items might be *comparable* in value even though they are incommensurable in the sense introduced above (i.e., even though neither is better than, worse than, or equally as good as the other). Instead of being related in one of these standard ways, they may be on a *par*, as she puts it (see Chang 2002b;

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<sup>20</sup> This section draws to a large extent on Rabinowicz (2008) and (2009a).

cf. also Chang 1997, 2002a and 2005).<sup>21</sup> Thus, consider, say, Mozart ( $x$ ) and Michelangelo ( $y$ ). They are comparable in their excellence as artists, but intuitively neither of them is better than the other.

What about the possibility that they are equally good? Chang dismisses this possibility using what she calls “the Small-Improvement Argument”. We are asked to envisage a third artist,  $x^+$ , who is slightly better than but otherwise similar to  $x$ .  $x^+$  is a fictional figure – a slightly improved version of Mozart – perhaps Mozart who managed to compose yet another *Requiem* and a couple of additional operas. Now, the idea is that  $x^+$  is a better artist than  $x$  without thereby being better than  $y$ . This would have been impossible if  $x$  and  $y$  had been equally good: Anything that’s better than one of them would have to be better than the other. Indeed, it seems that  $x^+$  and  $y$  are on a par, just as  $x$  and  $y$ .<sup>22</sup>

Just as equal goodness, parity is a symmetric relation, but—unlike equal goodness—this relation is not transitive. In the example above,  $x$  is on a par with  $y$ ,  $y$  is on a par with  $x^+$ , but  $x$  is not on a par with  $x^+$ :  $x^+$  is better than  $x$ . Again, unlike equal goodness, parity is irreflexive: No item is on a par with itself.

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<sup>21</sup> The notion of parity as a fourth form of comparability, along with the standard three relations of ‘better’, ‘worse’ and ‘equally good’, has predecessors in philosophy. Thus, Griffin (1986, pp. 81, 96ff) introduced a similar notion of ‘rough equality’, while Parfit (1984, p.431) suggested using the term ‘rough comparability’ for this relation.

<sup>22</sup> This argument was proposed by several philosophers prior to Chang. In particular, Raz (1986, p. 326) calls the possibility of such a ‘one-sided’ improvement “the mark of incommensurability”. On his view, if each item can be ‘one-sidedly’ improved, then this is a sufficient (but not necessary) test that two items are incommensurable, i.e. such that it is neither the case that one of them is better than the other, nor that they are of equal value. Note that two incommensurable items may be on a par, but they do not have to be.

So,  $x$  and  $y$  in our example aren't equally good, nor is any of them better than the other. That they nevertheless are comparable in value is something Chang (2002b) tries to establish by "the Unidimensional Chaining Argument". Envisage an item  $y_0$  that is worse than both  $x$  and  $y$ , while being similar in kind to, say,  $y$ . Suppose  $y_0$  is a sculptor, like Michelangelo ( $y$ ), but not in the same league as the latter. We are asked to imagine a finite sequence of items starting with  $y_0$  that goes all the way up to  $y$ , in which every successive item in one respect slightly improves on its immediate predecessor, while being equal to it in other respects. Respects in which improvements are made may vary as one moves up in the sequence. But in every step in the sequence there is, we assume, a small change in one respect only. Now, Chang suggests that such a small 'unidimensional' improvement cannot affect comparability: It cannot take us from an item that is comparable with  $x$  to one that is no longer comparable. Since the first element in the sequence is comparable with  $x$  (by hypothesis,  $y_0$  is worse than  $x$ ), the same should therefore apply—by induction—to each element that follows, up to and including the last element,  $y$ .

That a small unidimensional improvement cannot make comparability disappear is a controversial assumption. Chang's chaining argument is too *sorites*-like to allay the suspicion that it exploits potential indeterminacy (vagueness) in our judgments of comparability.<sup>23 24</sup>The

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<sup>23</sup> The starting point of the sequence ( $y_0$ ) might be determinately comparable with  $x$ , the endpoint ( $y$ ) might be determinately non-comparable with  $x$ , and we might have cases of indeterminate comparability somewhere in-between. This could be the reason for the apparent absence of a sharp break in the sequence.

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Broome (1997) has argued for a more radical claim, namely that allowing for vagueness in the threshold cases of value comparisons is outright incompatible with the postulation of (determinate) incommensurabilities. If this is right, then there is no room for parity in the presence of vagueness. However, Broome's argument is based on a controversial

possibility of vagueness also threatens the small improvement argument.<sup>25</sup> Chang admits that the argument for parity as a fourth type of value comparability remains incomplete until it is shown, as she indeed tries to do (see Chang 2002b), that parity phenomena cannot be explained away as instances of vagueness, or perhaps as mere gaps in our evaluative knowledge.

Assuming, however, that parity exists, how should this value relation be analyzed? Joshua Gert (2004) proposes to elucidate it by an appeal to FA-analysis: The main idea is that value comparisons can be seen as normative assessments of preference. Thus, one item is better than another if and only if preferring the former to the latter is required. Two items are equally good if and only if what is required is to be indifferent between them, i.e., to equi-prefer them both.

The novelty of Gert's approach, as compared with the traditional versions of FA-analysis, rests on the observation that there are two levels of normativity—the stronger level of requirement ('ought') and the weaker level of permission ('may'). It is the availability of permission—the weaker level of normativity—that makes conceptual room for parity:  $x$  and  $y$  can be said to be on a par if and only if it is permissible to prefer  $x$  to  $y$  *and* permissible to have the opposite preference. (For this definition, cf. Rabinowicz 2008. Gert's own definition of parity is much more demanding: too demanding, in fact, as shown by Rabinowicz.)

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assumption, the so-called Collapsing Principle, which has been criticized by other philosophers (cf. Carlson 2004, Gustafsson 2013, Elson 2013). Rabinowicz (2009b) shows how to accommodate both vagueness and parity in the same formal modeling.

<sup>25</sup> It might be that it is indeterminate whether  $x$  is better than, worse than, or equally as good as  $y$ , but determinate that one of these three relations does obtain between these two items. This is compatible with  $x^+$  being determinately better than  $x$  while not being determinately better than  $y$ .

Intuitively, we have to do with parity when value comparisons are based on several value-relevant dimensions or respects. In such a case, the overall preference we arrive at will depend on how we weigh the relevant dimensions vis-à-vis each other. Different admissible ways of weighing can give rise to different permissible preferences, and thereby to cases of parity in value.<sup>26</sup>

Parity is a form of comparability in value. What about incomparability? Rabinowicz (2008) makes the following suggestion. Preference and indifference are different kinds of preferential attitudes: To be indifferent between two items is to be equally prepared to make either choice. But for some pairs of items we might *lack* a fixed preferential attitude. In such a case, if we need to choose, we typically experience the choice situation as internally conflicted. We can see reasons on either side, but we cannot (or do not) balance them off. Or we waver without taking a definite stand. We make a choice if we have to, but without the conflict of reasons being resolved. This possibility of a fixed preferential attitude being absent allows us to accommodate incomparabilities in the FA-analytic framework. More precisely, if the absence of a (fixed) preferential attitude with regard to a pair of items is required, then the items can be said to be incomparable. That is,  $x$  and  $y$  are incomparable if and only if it is impermissible to either prefer one to the other or to be indifferent.

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<sup>26</sup> A different analysis of parity, which is not based on FA-analysis, is provided by Carlson (2010). Carlson defines parity in terms of betterness: Two items are on a par if neither is better than the other, nor are they equally good, and they have appropriate betterness relations to other items in the domain. (For the details, see Carlson's paper.) However, this definition can be plausible only if the domain of items is rich enough. Otherwise, there might well exist two items that intuitively are incomparable but that come out as being on a par on the definition under consideration.



Isn't this definition too demanding? Shouldn't it be enough for incomparability that the absence of a preferential attitude is *permissible* rather than required? Well, such a lenient criterion would seem awkward. We do not say that something is undesirable if it is merely permissible not to desire it. It is undesirable only if desiring it is *impermissible* in some sense. By analogy, we shouldn't say that two items are incomparable if it is merely permissible not to have a preferential attitude as they are concerned. However, if we wish, we can introduce this weaker relation by a stipulative definition:  $x$  and  $y$  are weakly incomparable if and only if it is permissible neither to prefer one to the other nor to be indifferent.

While incomparability is a 'requiring' concept, comparability in value could be understood either in permissive terms, as the contradictory of incomparability (i.e. as the relation that obtains between  $x$  and  $y$  if and only if it is permissible to have a preferential attitude with respect to  $x$  and  $y$ ), or in requiring terms, as the contradictory of weak incomparability (i.e. as the relation that obtains between  $x$  and  $y$  if and only if it is required to have a preferential attitude with respect to  $x$  and  $y$ ). One might refer to the latter, stronger concept as 'full comparability'.

Rabinowicz (2008) suggests that one might work with the following 'intersection modelling' to account for these different relations in a more general and more formal way. Suppose we focus on a domain  $D$  of items. Let  $K$  be the class of all permissible preference orderings of the items in  $D$ .  $K$  is non-empty, i.e., at least one preference ordering of the items in the domain is permissible. The orderings in  $K$  need not be complete, i.e., they might contain gaps. In a complete preference ordering, for every pair of items in the domain, either one item is preferred to the other or they are both equi-preferred. Since we need to make room for incomparabilities and thus need to allow for gaps in preferential attitudes, completeness cannot be assumed. What can be assumed, however, is that all the orderings in  $K$  are well-behaved at least in the following sense: In every such permissible ordering, weak preference

(that is, preference-or- indifference) is a quasi-order. I.e., it is a transitive and reflexive relation.

In terms of  $K$ , the relation of betterness between items can now be defined as the *intersection* of permissible preferences:

**(B)**  $x$  is *better* than  $y$  if and only if  $x$  is preferred to  $y$  in every ordering in  $K$ .

This is another way of saying that  $x$  is *better* than  $y$  if and only preferring  $x$  to  $y$  is required.

Moving now to other value relations, it is easily seen how equality in value, parity, incomparability, etc. are definable in this modeling:

**(E)** Two items are *equally good* if and only if they are equi-preferred in every ordering in  $K$ .

**(P)**  $x$  and  $y$  are *on a par* if and only if  $K$  contains two orderings such that  $x$  is preferred to  $y$  in one and  $y$  is preferred to  $x$  in the other.

**(I)**  $x$  and  $y$  are *incomparable* if and only if every ordering in  $K$  contains a gap with regard to  $x$  and  $y$ .

And so on.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Gert (2004) provides a different model, which is framed in terms of the assignments of intervals of permissible strengths to items in the domain. For an item  $x$ , we can denote this interval by  $[x^{min}, x^{max}]$ , with  $x^{min}$  standing for the interval's lower bound and  $x^{max}$  for its upper bound. Then  $x$  is said to be better than  $y$  if and only if  $x^{min} > y^{max}$ , i.e., if and only if the weakest permissible preference for  $x$  is stronger than the strongest permissible preference for  $y$ . For  $x$  and  $y$  to be on a par, their intervals must overlap, which means that there is a permissible preference for  $x$  that is stronger than some permissible preference for  $y$  and vice versa: there is a permissible preference for  $y$  that is stronger than some permissible preference for  $x$ . Gert's interval model is criticized in Chang (2005) and Rabinowicz (2008). The main objection is that the model lacks constraints on *combinations* of permissible preferences: any permissible preference for one item can be combined with any permissible preference for the

The intersection model allows us to derive formal properties of value relations from the corresponding conditions on permissible preference orderings. Thus, one can now *prove* that betterness is a transitive and asymmetric relation, that equal goodness is an equivalence relation (i.e., that it is transitive, symmetric and reflexive) and that whatever is better than, worse than, on a par with or incomparable with one of the equally good items must have exactly the same value relation to the other item. Thus, the modeling does some work.

Indeed, this feature of the modeling might give one pause. To give an example, consider betterness. That this relation is transitive is, many would say, a conceptual truth. (Many, but not all. For an opposing view, see Temkin 1996, 2012.) But in the intersection modeling this transitivity condition on betterness comes from the transitivity of preference orderings in  $K$ . Transitivity might seem to be a very plausible condition on permissible preference orderings. But is it as firmly established as the corresponding condition on betterness? Similar remarks apply to other formal features of value relations that are derivable in the modeling. This might be seen as a weakness of the proposal under consideration. Another weakness has to do with the very notion of preference. If preference is conceptually tied to potential choice, analyzing value relations in terms of permissible preferences restricts the domain of such relations to objects between which a choice is possible. Since objects of choice at bottom are options at an agent's disposal, this appears to be a problematic limitation: After all, we want to make value comparisons also between other things (works of art, persons, states of the world, etc.) For a suggestion how to deal with these problems without giving up the basic contours of the intersection model, see Rabinowicz (2012).

But let us move on. We now have all we need for a general taxonomy of binary value relations. In the table below, each column describes one type of a value relation, by specifying

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other item. It can be shown that this leads to counter-intuitive results: Certain structures of value relations cannot be represented by the interval modeling.

## VALUE TAXONOMY

all the preferential positions that are permissible with regard to a pair of items. There are four such positions to consider: preference ( $\succ$ ), indifference ( $\approx$ ), dispreference ( $\prec$ ), and gap ( $/$ ).

There is a plus sign in a column for every position that is permissible in a given value type.

Since for any two items at least one preferential position must be permissible (if  $K$  is non-empty), the number of columns equals the number of ways one can pick a non-empty subset out of the set of four positions. For example, in type 7, all preferential positions except for the gap are permissible, while in type 15, which corresponds to incomparability (**I**), the gap is the only permissible position. In type 1, which corresponds to betterness (**B**), the only permissible position is preference, i. e., preferring one item to the other is required. And so on.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
$\succ$	+	+				+	+	+	+	+	+				
$\approx$		+	+	+			+		+		+	+	+		
$\prec$				+	+	+	+	+	+				+	+	
$/$								+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	<b>B</b>		<b>E</b>		<b>W</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>						<b>I</b>

The columns in the table correspond to *atomic* types of value relations. Collections of atomic types, such as parity (**P**, types 6 – 9, i.e. all types in which there are plus signs in the first and the third rows), comparability (types 1 - 14), or weak incomparability (types 8 - 15), form types in a broader sense of the word. While Chang was right to suggest that parity is a form of comparability, it is not an atomic type. In this respect, it differs from the three traditional value relations: better (**B**), worse (**W**), and equally good (**E**).

The fifteen atomic types listed above are all *logically* possible. But some of them might not represent ‘real’ possibilities. For example, it might seem that both indifference and preferential gaps with regard to items that are on a par should always be permissible. This

would exclude types 6, 7 and 8. In result, only type 9 would be left for parity, which would mean that parity after all does boil down to an atomic type of value relation. Note that extra requirements of this kind importantly differ from such conditions as, say, transitivity of preference or symmetry of indifference. The latter impose constraints on each ordering in  $K$ . The extra requirements instead impose constraints on class  $K$  taken as a whole: They state that  $K$  must contain orderings of certain kinds if it contains orderings of certain other kinds.

Rabinowicz's modeling of value relations has not been left unopposed. For one thing, it has been pointed out that this account presupposes FA-analysis of value, which might well be questioned. And, in any case, its reliance on FA-analysis makes it less general than would be desirable (cf. Carlson 2010; for some general criticisms of FA-analysis see Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004 and Bykvist 2009). At the same time, the account in question appeals to two levels of normativity, while the classic FA-analysis mentions just one level (fittingness). Gustafsson (2013b) argues that the account is unacceptable because it violates what he calls value-preference symmetry, i.e. the condition to the effect that for every value relation there is a corresponding preference relation, and vice versa. To preserve the symmetry, Gustafsson suggests, we should introduce parity not just as a value relation but also as a *sui generis* preference relation. On his account, then, two items are on a par in value if and only if it is fitting to hold them preferentially on a par.

Obviously, the discussions on this subject, as on several other subjects in the theory of value, have not reached a point where consensus is in sight. Given the ever-questioning nature of philosophical investigation, it is possible that this point will never be reached.

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