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Adaptive preferences, self-expression and preference-based freedom rankings

Annalisa Costella 

Erasmus Institute for Philosophy and Economics (EIPE), Erasmus School of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, the Netherlands
Email: costella@esphil.eur.nl

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Abstract

If preference-based freedom rankings are based on all-things-considered preferences, they risk judging phenomena of adaptive preferences as freedom enhancing. As a remedy, it has been suggested to base preference-based freedom rankings on reasonable preferences. But this approach is also problematic. This article argues that the quest for a remedy is unnecessary. All-things-considered preferences retain information on whether the availability of an option contributes to the value that freedom has for a person's self-expression. If preference-based freedom rankings use all-things-considered preferences to evaluate whether an option contributes to a person's self-expression, they are immune to the problem posed by adaptive preferences.

Keywords: Freedom rankings; preference-based freedom rankings; adaptive preferences; self-expression; freedom

1. Introduction

The 1990s marked the beginning of a literature at the intersection of political philosophy and social choice theory that investigates how to measure an individual's freedom.¹ This literature, initiated by Pattanaik and Xu (1990), examines how to

¹See, among others: Jones and Sugden (1982), Pattanaik and Xu (1990, 1998), Sen (1991), Puppe (1996), Van Hees and Wissenburg (1999), Bavetta and Guala (2003), Van Hees (2010), Foster (2011), Binder (2014a, 2014b, 2019), Garnett (2016) and Côté (2020). There is one related, if distinct, literature, which is devoted to the measurement of freedom in interactive settings (see for instance Braham 2006; Bervoets 2007; Dowding and Van Hees 2008; Pattanaik 2018; Sher 2018). Authors such as Carter (2004) have argued that the literature with which I engage aims to measure freedom of choice, rather than freedom, and the two concepts differ. Whether the two concepts differ is open for debate. I leave this issue aside and simply assume, as most contributors in this literature do, that freedom of choice and freedom are equivalent (see, among others, Pattanaik and Xu 1990; Van Hees 2010; Côté 2020).

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rank sets of alternatives in terms of how much freedom they offer. This philosophical endeavour has cast light on the conditions under which the availability of an alternative increases a person's freedom, supplying powerful tools for the conceptual analysis of freedom.

Amartya Sen (1988, 1990, 1991) has significantly advanced the field. He operationalized the intuition that the extent of a person's freedom depends on the value of available alternatives. Sen's (1988, 1990, 1991) contribution pioneered an extensive body of work on orderings of sets in terms of how much freedom they offer, now known as *preference-based freedom rankings*. These rankings capture the subjective value of an alternative using an individual's preferences (over the alternatives in the ranked sets). Two ways have been used to determine the subjective value of alternatives. The first equates the subjective value of an alternative to the degree to which the alternative satisfies an individual's preferences. How much freedom a set offers therefore depends on the extent to which available alternatives satisfy a person's preferences (see e.g. Pattanaik and Xu 1998; Nehring and Puppe 1999). The second approach uses preferences to measure the subjective value of the alternative in terms of a variable that is taken to be relevant for freedom (such as autonomy or difference between alternatives). How much freedom a set offers therefore depends on the subjective value of the available alternatives measured, as explained above (see e.g. Bavetta and Guala 2003; Peragine and Romero-Medina 2006; Binder 2014a).

Two types of preferences have been used: all-things-considered preferences and so-called reasonable preferences (Foster 2011). Both, however, are assumed to be problematic. Preference-based freedom rankings that use all-things-considered preferences have been regarded as fundamentally flawed. They cannot account for the well-grounded intuition that adapting one's preferences to constraints does not make one freer (Binder 2019).² Call this *the challenge from adaptive preferences* (CAP). To escape CAP, scholars such as Pattanaik and Xu (1998), Sugden (1998) and Nehring and Puppe (1999) have proposed using a person's reasonable preferences. These are loosely conceived as the set of preferences that it would be reasonable for a person to hold. However, reasonable preferences are no less problematic than all-things-considered ones (Van Hees and Wissenburg 1999; Bavetta and Guala 2003; Bavetta and Peragine 2006; Binder 2019). There are conceptual, epistemic and empirical challenges involved in delineating them. Defining reasonable preferences on the basis of a substantive understanding of reasonableness leads to conceptual controversy. Determining reasonable preferences on the basis of a procedural understanding of reasonableness requires knowledge of an individual's values that it is both theoretically and empirically difficult to acquire.

It appears, then, that preference-based approaches to freedom rankings face an impasse. If preference-based freedom rankings are based on all-things-considered preferences, they risk running into CAP. If they are based on reasonable preferences,

²Pattanaik and Xu (1990), Sen (1993), Gravel (2009) and Foster (2011) also touch upon the issue.

they face the conceptual, epistemic and empirical challenges that are involved in delineating them.³

In this article, I show a way out of the impasse. I argue that, contrary to what is standardly held (Dowding and Van Hees 2009; Foster 2011), freedom rankings that rely on a person's all-things-considered preferences can overcome CAP. They do so if they account for the value that freedom has as a necessary condition for a person's self-expression (as defined by Scanlon 1998). I call this value simply the *self-expressive value*. And I argue that capturing *self-expressive value* does not require individuating a set of reasonable preferences.

By illuminating that all-things-considered preferences convey more (and less problematic) information about alternatives than typically realized, this article restores their role as a legitimate informational basis for preference-based freedom rankings. This has two implications. On the one hand, it contributes to the conceptual analysis of freedom. It shows that using one's all-things-considered preferences to delineate whether an alternative increases the freedom of a set does not make preference-based freedom rankings vulnerable to CAP. On the other hand, it informs the use of freedom rankings in social choice theory. It illustrates that the information on which a freedom ranking can be based is more limited than usually assumed.

Before setting out the structure of the article, let me emphasize what this article is not about. I do not aim to argue that all value-based conceptions of freedom are immune to CAP.⁴ Moreover, I do not aspire to show that preference-based approaches that use all-things-considered preferences are exempt from other well-known critiques (see the debates between Dowding and Van Hees (2007, 2008) and Carter and Kramer (2008)).

The article proceeds as follows. Sections 2 and 3 lay the conceptual ground. In section 2, I describe CAP and show its relevance for preference-based freedom rankings. In section 3, I outline why freedom is valuable as a necessary condition for one's self-expression. By drawing on the work of Scanlon (1998), I show that freedom is valuable – among other things – as a necessary condition to enable a person to express herself.

Sections 4 and 5 do the argumentative work. In section 4, I show that it is possible to capture the value of freedom for one's self-expression from little more than one's all-things-considered preferences. To do so, I illustrate that an alternative increases the self-expressive value of a set under three conditions. I argue that the satisfaction of these conditions can be inferred from information about little more than a person's all-things-considered preferences. In section 5, I argue that preference-based freedom rankings can deal successfully with CAP as long as they account for self-expressive value. Section 6 concludes by illustrating the relevance of this endeavour.

³This impasse plagues both ways of determining the subjective value of alternatives in preference-based freedom rankings.

⁴I refer to value-based conceptions of freedom as those that define freedom as dependent on the subjective value of the available options.

2. Preference-based freedom rankings and adaptive preferences

Consider:

Job. Bob prefers being a doctor to being a farmer. There are no constraints on the pursuit of his career. Call this situation, and the corresponding choice set available to Bob, **Job 1**. A new government comes to power and bans all universities that offer medical education. Being a doctor turns out to be impossible for Bob. As a result, he adapts his preferences accordingly, preferring being a farmer over a doctor. Call this situation, and the corresponding choice set available to Bob, **Job 2**.

Is Bob just as free in **Job 2** as he is in **Job 1**?⁵ Most political philosophers would answer in the negative. There is a consensus that adapting one's preferences to constraints (as Bob does in **Job 2**) does not induce a state of freedom (Carter 2019).⁶ The freedom ranking of the available alternatives in **Job 1** and **2** should not change merely as a result of Bob's preference adaptation to the constraints he faces in **Job 2**. Yet, as I will show below, this well-grounded intuition poses a problem for preference-based freedom rankings. They either cannot account for the fact that adapting one's preferences should not change the freedom ranking of Bob's available options in **Jobs 1** and **2** or they can do so at the cost of quite demanding assumptions. Before delineating CAP in more detail, let me clarify what I mean by 'all-things-considered' and 'adaptive' preferences respectively.

All-things-considered preferences: All-things-considered preferences are *binary* relations over alternatives. They are subjective comparative evaluations that an option is better than another instantiated in an *actual* disposition to choose the former over the latter when both are available (Baigent 1995; Hausman 2011; Bradley 2017). They result from a person's deliberation, aggregation and resolution of her different cares and concerns appropriate for the considerations relevant to her choice (Baigent 1995; Hausman 2011; Chang 2015).⁷ I use 'cares and concerns' loosely – they can be a person's values, identities (see Baigent 1995; Binder 2019), meta-preferences and so on.

⁵The example purposely leaves open the normative ground of these legal constraints. While there might be some cases in which legal constraints that are normatively grounded can increase a person's freedom, I am ruling out these occurrences.

⁶Some contend that consciously adapting one's preferences to objective constraints makes a person freer, inducing a state of liberation (such as that induced by Stoics or Buddhists who get rid of desires). Most philosophers contributing to the literature on freedom, however, agree with Carter's (2019) claim that 'this state [...] is not one that liberals would want to call one of freedom, for it ... risks masking important forms of oppression'.

⁷I assume that a person does not consider *all* her cares and concerns when forming an all-things-considered preference for one option over another, but only those appropriate for the consideration relevant to one's choice.

Adaptive preferences: A person adapts her all-things-considered preferences when she downgrades her optimal option in a set as a result of it being unavailable. More precisely, a person forms adaptive preferences when two things occur. First, the options available to her shrink from those in a set, call it A , to those in a proper subset of it, call it B . B is defined as A without the optimal alternative(s) in A (optimal as judged by a person's all-things-considered preferences when the alternatives available are those in A). So, $A \setminus B$ is the set of optimal element(s) according to one's 'non-adaptive' all-things-considered preferences. Second, as a result of the shrinking of the set, a person's preferences change in such a way that she evaluates the optimal alternative(s) in B as strictly better than the optimal (according to one's non-adaptive preferences) alternative(s) in A .

With a definition of all-things-considered and adaptive preferences in hand, I can illustrate CAP. As I will elucidate, preference-based freedom rankings suffer from CAP if they assume that an available alternative increases the freedom that a set offers if this alternative is ranked at least as good as the best alternative(s) in the set along one's all-things-considered preferences.⁸ To display how this shared assumption makes preference-based rankings suffer from CAP, I draw on Puppe and Xu's (2010) freedom ranking and define it over Bob's all-things-considered preferences. Since the ranking can be specified to correspond to a variety of preference-based freedom rankings in the literature, employing it comes with no loss of generality.⁹ The ranking is thus well-suited to show how CAP affects *all* preference-based freedom rankings that use a person's all-things-considered preferences. Let me introduce the notation necessary to understand the ranking.

I denote by X the finite universal set of alternatives, here understood as alternatives that represent specific freedoms (to do something or be someone). The collection of all non-empty subsets of X is denoted by Z . Elements A, B , etc. are sets (of mutually exclusive alternatives) that belong to Z . The notation $E(A) \subseteq A$ denotes a subset of A that includes all and only the so-called 'essential' elements. Essential elements are alternatives that strictly increase the freedom that the set A offers. The intuitive idea is that, if these alternatives were not in the set, the freedom of the set would decrease. The symbol \succsim denotes a freedom ranking (i.e. a binary relation that ranks elements in Z) and should be interpreted as 'offers at least as much freedom as'. \succ is its asymmetric and \sim its symmetric part. To explain CAP, I will define the essential elements in a set on the basis of a person's all-things-considered preferences. Hence, $E(A)$, which denotes the essential elements in set A , will here designate the elements that are judged best in set A according to a person's

⁸This feature coincides with what Van Hees (2010: 695) and Binder (2019: 88) call the 'condition of irrelevant expansion' under the assumption that the set of essential alternatives is identified on the basis of a person's preferences. Rankings that share the assumption that an alternative that is judged at least as good as the best alternative in a set increases its freedom are proposed by Sen (1991), Pattanaik and Xu (1998) and Romero-Medina (2001), among others. Not all of them use all-things-considered preferences as a source of information.

⁹More precisely, a simpler version of this ranking, which can be found in Van Hees (2010) under the name of 'simple eligibility ranking', can be specified to correspond to a variety of preference-based rankings in the literature. To understand why this is the case, see Van Hees (2010) and Binder (2019).

all-things-considered preferences on the elements in the set. I use the notation R to denote a binary relation on X that is complete, reflexive and transitive. xRy is interpreted as x being ‘at least as all-things-considered good as’ y . P is its asymmetric part and I is its symmetric one.

Puppe and Xu’s (2010) freedom-ranking: For all $A, B \in Z$, $A \succcurlyeq B$ iff $\# [E(A \cup B)] \cap A \# [E(A \cup B)] \cap B$.

According to Puppe and Xu’s (2010) freedom ranking, set A offers at least as much freedom as another set B if and only if A contains at least as many essential alternatives as the intersection between the union of A and B and B . I here define alternatives as ‘essential’ when they are a person’s favourite ones in the union of the two sets as judged by her all-things-considered preferences. So, how does Puppe and Xu’s freedom ranking, based on a person’s all-things-considered preferences, order **Job 1** and **Job 2**?

	Bob’s Preferences	Options available to Bob	Essential alternatives	Intersection between the set of essential alternatives and the options available	Freedom Ranking
Job 1	Doctor P Farmer	$C_1 = \{\text{Doctor, Farmer}\}$	$E(C_1 \cup C_2) = \{\text{Doctor}\}$	$[E(C_1 \cup C_2)] \cap C_1 = \{\text{Doctor}\}$ $[E(C_1 \cup C_2)] \cap C_2 = \{\emptyset\}$	$C_1 \succ C_2$
Job 2	Farmer P Doctor ¹⁰	$C_2 = \{\text{Farmer}\}$	$E(C_1 \cup C_2) = \{\text{Farmer}\}$	$[E(C_1 \cup C_2)] \cap C_1 = \{\text{Farmer}\}$ $[E(C_1 \cup C_2)] \cap C_2 = \{\text{Farmer}\}$	$C_1 \sim C_2$.

Along Bob’s all-things-considered preferences in **Job 1**, C_1 offers him strictly more freedom than C_2 ($C_1 \succ C_2$). The reason is that, in **Job 1**, there is one ‘essential’ alternative available to Bob, as judged by his all-things-considered preferences (Doctor), while in **Job 2** there are none. By simply adapting his preferences to constraints, Bob enjoys the same freedom in **Job 1** and **Job 2** ($C_1 \sim C_2$). Along Bob’s adaptive preferences, both **Job 1** and **2** contain one element that is best (Farmer). Yet, it seems to fly in the face of common sense that a person can be rendered freer only by adapting her preferences to the constraints she faces. A plausible freedom ranking should not change how **Job 1** and **Job 2** are ordered only as a result of a person’s preference adaptation. Hence, if, along Bob’s all-things-considered preferences in **Job 1**, $C_1 \succ C_2$, it should be the case that, even if he adapts his preferences to constraints, $C_1 \succ C_2$. But a freedom ranking that is based on Bob’s all-things-considered preferences cannot account for this. Bob’s case exemplifies a well-known problem: preference-based freedom rankings, defined over a person’s all-things-considered preferences, fall prey to CAP.

¹⁰There is nothing controversial in assuming that Bob has an all-things-considered preference for Farmer over Doctor even if the latter is not available to him. Formally, Bob’s all-things-considered preferences are binary relations defined over X , the universal set of alternatives. Substantively, I have defined preferences with a hybrid account (as mental attitudes that are likely to be instantiated in choice), and thus Bob can have preferences over options that are not objects of choice.

In response to CAP, scholars such as Jones and Sugden (1982), Sugden (1998, 2003), Pattanaik and Xu (1998), Nehring and Puppe (1999) and Romero-Medina (2001) have suggested doing away with all-things-considered preferences as the informational basis of preference-based freedom rankings. They have proposed instead to base freedom rankings on a person's reasonable preferences. Reasonable preferences are loosely understood as the preferences that it would be reasonable for a person to hold, or that a person could reasonably hold. Since adaptive preferences have been held unreasonable, freedom rankings based on reasonable preferences arguably escape CAP. Reasonable preferences have been defined either substantively (see e.g. Jones and Sugden 1982; Sugden 1998; Pattanaik and Xu 1998; Sugden 2003; Romero-Medina 2001) or procedurally (see Binder 2019) (for a complete overview, see Dowding and Van Hees (2009) and Gravel (2009)).

Under substantive understandings of reasonableness, a preference is reasonable if it is objectively or subjectively reasonable. It is objectively reasonable when it counts as such under an objective account of reasonableness. It is subjectively reasonable when it is judged reasonable in the light of the future preferences that an individual could hold, or the social group she belongs to or the preferences that a relevant percentage of people in society holds. Defining reasonable preferences substantively has been deemed problematic. However one specifies reasonableness, it is hard to come up with a definition that enjoys consensus (Van Hees and Wissenburg 1999; Bavetta and Guala 2003; Bavetta and Peragine 2006; Binder 2019). Binder (2019) has responded to the challenge by replacing substantive understandings of reasonableness with procedural ones. She proposed to determine what counts as a reasonable preference for an individual by looking at how her different values, or identities, rank the options. On her account, reasonable preferences are those that can be reasonably derived from a person's identities or deeper values. She defines a person's reasonable preferences in two steps. First, she delineates a ranking of options that orders an option x higher than another option y if, and only if, all the identities or deeper values that an individual has rank x as not lower than y . Then, she takes reasonable preferences to be the transitive completions of this ranking. Procedural definitions of reasonableness run into epistemic and empirical problems. They run into an epistemic challenge because they need to assume that a person not only has access to her deeper values or identities but also knows how each of these values or identities partially ranks the available options. And this is a demanding epistemic requirement. They are also vulnerable to an empirical challenge, since it is difficult, in practice, to elicit a person's deeper values and identities.

To summarize, replacing all-things-considered preferences with reasonable ones as the informational basis for preference-based freedom rankings raises conceptual, epistemic and empirical challenges. On the one hand, substantive definitions of reasonableness are conceptually controversial. On the other hand, procedural definitions face epistemic and empirical challenges. Epistemic challenges, since a person may not have access to how each of her values and identities partially ranks the available options. Empirical challenges, since it is practically difficult for external observers to elicit such rankings.

As a result, preference-based approaches to freedom rankings face an impasse. If these rankings are based on a person's all-things-considered preferences, they risk

running into CAP. If they are based on a person's reasonable preferences, they can escape CAP at the cost of conceptual, epistemic and empirical challenges.

Most scholars have attempted to resolve the impasse by concentrating on reasonable preferences. Here, instead, I will focus on all-things-considered preferences. I will argue that preference-based freedom rankings, defined on a person's all-things-considered preferences, do not necessarily suffer from CAP. They do not if all-things-considered preferences are used as a source of information about the value that freedom has as a necessary condition for self-expression.

3. Freedom and its value for self-expression

I have claimed in Section 1 that accounting for the value that freedom has as a necessary condition for one's self-expression allows freedom rankings to deal with CAP without needing reasonable preferences. In this section, I will explain what this value is and what increases it.

Freedom is considered valuable, among other things, since it is arguably a necessary condition to promote, recognize and exercise a person's agency (Carter 1995; Bavetta and Guala 2003; Binder 2019). Having freedom, it has been argued, enables one to say no to the options one wants to reject (Hurka 1987; Carter 1995, 1999). This ability, in turn, is often understood as a necessary prerequisite for a person's agency (Hurka 1987; Carter 1999). More specifically, as Scanlon (1998) has pointed out, the availability of alternatives that one can reject is a necessary condition to promote, recognize and exercise an *instance* of agency, self-expression.¹¹ Self-expression amounts to the ability to express oneself (one's cares, concerns and values) through the act of *choosing*. One can express one's cares, concerns and values by *choosing* one's job, or a present for one's partner or the colour of one's curtains. In all these instances, the act of choosing allows a person to express herself only if it is meaningful in some minimal sense. For instance, the choice of one's job or a present for one's partner is not self-expressive if it is made under coercion. As such, a necessary condition to choose in a self-expressive way is to have other choices available besides the chosen one, so that the person can reject alternative ways of expressing her cares and concerns. Let me call the value of freedom as a necessary condition for one's self-expression the *self-expressive value*. Whenever I use the term self-expressive value of a set, I will refer to the value of a choice set for a person's self-expression.

In this article, I will rely on two assumptions about what increases the self-expressive value of a set. First, I will assume that only alternatives that differ in some meaningful ways from those already available in a set increase its self-expressive value. Second, I will assume that meaningful difference between options cannot be

¹¹Scanlon (1998: 252) does not refer to freedom, but to choice. He argues that having choice is valuable, among other things, for its 'representative value'. Two clarifications are in order. First, I use the term 'self-expressive' in the same way as Scanlon uses 'representative'. Second, while he labels his discussion as one about 'choice', it directly applies to what the freedom ranking literature labels as 'freedom'. Indeed, Scanlon discusses why having further options besides a person's chosen alternative is valuable. I draw on his argument to suggest that having freedom (having more than one's chosen alternative available) is valuable for a specific feature of agency, self-expression.

captured without reference to an individual's values. Let me justify the plausibility of these assumptions in turn.

Imagine that a person were to choose differently from how she does. These counterfactual choices would express a way of deliberating on, aggregating and resolving her cares and concerns that is different from her actual one. Unchosen options, therefore, can represent alternative ways of expressing one's cares and concerns. But not all do. Indeed, some alternatives may be indistinguishable from what one chooses, others incomparable (I will expand on this in the next section). As a result, only alternatives that are different (in a way relevant to self-expression) from the chosen one in the set increase its self-expressive value. Given my definition of all-things-considered preferences, this implies that an alternative that is not different from the one that is judged all-things-considered best in the set does not increase self-expression.¹² Consider **Job 1** above. The availability of an *unchosen* career (Farmer) increases the self-expressive value of Bob's set of jobs only if it provides him with an additional opportunity to express himself (his actual cares and concerns) by rejecting a career that conveys alternative cares and concerns. If Bob deemed the two careers (Farmer and Doctor) indistinguishable, it would be hard to see how the availability of a career in farming could increase the self-expressive value of Bob's set of jobs. The reason is that choosing Doctor *over* Farmer would not allow Bob to better express the cares and concerns invested in being a Doctor by refusing those conveyed by being a Farmer.

Let me now justify my second assumption, which is that the difference between an alternative and one's all-things-considered best in a set can only be defined with reference to a person's preferences. As Sugden (1998) has convincingly argued, whether two alternatives differ depends on what features of these alternatives are relevant to the context at hand. Here, I am interested in the difference between alternatives that is relevant to a person's self-expression. Hence, whether two alternatives differ in a way that is relevant to a person's self-expression crucially depends on the viewpoint of the person who is evaluating the options (Sugden 1998). If this is the case, Sugden (1998) continues, whether two options differ can only be captured with reference to an individual's values. To see this, consider the example of Bob again. Whether Farmer and Doctor differ in a way that is relevant to Bob's self-expression depends on whether Bob deems them to be different. This hinges on what he considers relevant about the alternatives, which rests on his values. So, the possibility of rejecting Farmer in **Job 1** increases the self-expressive value of the set only if Bob considers it different in a relevant way from Doctor, which ultimately depends on his values.

Importantly, making these two assumptions entails that self-expressive value cannot be measured in a value-neutral way. The reason is that these assumptions jointly entail that whether an alternative increases one's self-expression depends on

¹²One might wonder why the requirement is that the alternatives must be different only from the all-things-considered best alternative in the set, rather than from any other alternative in the set. Since I am concerned with alternatives that increase the self-expressive value of a set, I am only interested in whether rejecting unchosen alternatives allows a person to better express herself by selecting her chosen one. As a result, I am exclusively interested in the difference between an alternative and the one that a person *chooses*.

the values that a person holds. As a result, the value of a set of options for a person's self-expression can only be measured with reference to a person's values.¹³

4. Capturing self-expressive value

How to judge whether the availability of an alternative increases the self-expressive value of a set? In this section, I show that little more than knowledge about a person's all-things-considered preferences is needed. This lays the ground for the next section. There, I argue that it is unnecessary to delineate a reference set of reasonable preferences to overcome CAP. Freedom rankings based on all-things-considered preferences are immune to CAP as long as they account for self-expressive value.

4.1. Comparability, absence of indifference and of dominated worseness

I will outline three conditions that the relationship between alternatives may satisfy: *all-things-considered comparability*, *all-things-considered absence of indifference* and *all-things-considered absence of dominated worseness*. I will argue that whether an alternative increases the self-expressive value of a choice set depends on the relationship between the alternative and the all-things-considered best in the set. More specifically, it must be possible to compare the alternative and the best option in the set all things considered, the options must not be all-things-considered indifferent and the alternative must not be considered dominatedly worse than the best one. If and only if these conditions are jointly satisfied, the alternative increases the self-expressive value of a set. Checking the satisfaction of these conditions, in turn, requires knowledge about little more than a person's all-things-considered preferences. I will first illustrate these conditions and how their satisfaction can be inferred from a person's all-things-considered preferences. Then, I will argue that they are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for an alternative to increase the self-expressive value of a set.

4.1.1. Comparability

When it is possible for a person to make an all-things-considered comparison between two options, the relationship between these two options is one of *comparability*. If two items can be compared pairwise all-things-considered, this implies that all the values (i.e. cares and concerns) that matter when comparing them can be aggregated or unified in terms of an all-things-considered preference relation. Take, for instance, the all-things-considered comparison between (being) a Farmer and (being) a Doctor and that between (being) a Farmer and (being) the Number nine (Chang 2004, 2015: 4).¹⁴ Since Farmer and Doctor can arguably be compared all things considered, this implies that they are alternatives in the relevant

¹³To be sure, I have *not* expressed the view that only the availability of alternatives that are different from one's favourite in a set enhances a person's freedom. Rather, I have argued that only the availability of these alternatives increases self-expressive value.

¹⁴While being the Number nine is metaphysically impossible, I ask the reader to use her imagination or replace the example with cases that she deems more plausible.

sense of the word – all the cares and concerns relevant to evaluating the two options can be aggregated or unified into an all-things-considered preference relation. Farmer and Number nine, in contrast, cannot plausibly be compared all-things-considered. They might be compared with respect to some cares and concerns an individual has, say, mathematical beauty (Number nine seems better) or career appeal (Farmer seems better). But it seems implausible that they can be compared all things considered. The reason is that the person comparing the alternatives may rank one better or worse than the other according to specific values, but cannot aggregate or unify those values into one's all-things-considered preference ranking.

It should be noticed that if a person's all-things-considered preference ranking over options is complete, this entails comparability of the ranked alternatives. The reason is that, in economic theory, all-things-considered preferences (over options in a set) satisfy completeness when all the alternatives in the set are comparable pairwise by an all-things-considered preference ranking, usually understood as an all-things-considered betterness relation. For instance, Bob has complete preferences over his alternatives in **Job 1** if he judges Farmer all-things-considered better than, worse than or indifferent to Doctor. Consequently, the satisfaction of *comparability* is entailed by the satisfaction of completeness of one's all-things-considered preferences.

4.1.2. Absence of indifference

To define what *absence of indifference* amounts to, let me delineate what (all-things-considered) indifference is. When a person judges an alternative all-things-considered at least as good as another and vice-versa, the relationship between the two options is one of indifference. According to Ullmann-Margalit and Morgenbesser (1977), a person deems two options indifferent when she is willing to *pick* – arbitrarily select – either. There are two distinct cases of indifference. First, a person is indifferent between two options when all the cares and concerns appropriate for the consideration with respect to which one is comparing them rank them as indifferent vis-à-vis each other. Second, when her cares and concerns rank the two options differently vis-à-vis each other but these options are, all things considered (i.e. weighing the relative importance of the different cares and concerns), equally good.

The satisfaction of *absence of indifference* between two options can be inferred from a person's all-things-considered preferences between them. The reason is that all-things-considered preferences are usually understood as a ranking of alternatives in terms of an all-things-considered betterness relation (see above). As Sen (1977) made clear, a person who ranks options as all-things-considered indifferent is best understood as willing to pick – arbitrarily select – among those. So, *absence of indifference* between two options is satisfied if two alternatives are not ranked as indifferent vis-à-vis each other, along one's all-things-considered preferences.

4.1.3. All-things-considered absence of dominated worseness

Just as in the case of *absence of indifference*, I specify *absence of dominated worseness* by defining dominated worseness. I define the relationship between two options as

one of dominated worseness when the person comparing the two alternatives deems one option all-things-considered worse than the other *and every care and concern of the individual (aggregated or unified to form the all-things-considered preference) ranks the former strictly worse than the latter.*¹⁵ The relation ‘being dominatedly worse than’ does not correspond to any binary relation over alternatives as commonly used in economic theory. It is a subset of the relation ‘being all-things-considered strictly worse than’.¹⁶

While it is sufficient to know a person’s all-things-considered preferences to check the satisfaction of *comparability* and *absence of indifference*, this is not the case for *absence of dominated worseness*. Indeed, it is also necessary to have access to a person’s ‘cares and concerns’ in that case. However, the information needed is limited: it is sufficient to know whether an option is ranked worst by all of an individual’s cares and concerns, without needing to have access to the complete ranking of options by her cares and concerns.

4.2. Comparability, absence of indifference and of dominated worseness: necessary conditions

Let me argue that the availability of an alternative increases the self-expressive value of a set only if the relationship between the alternative and the all-things-considered best in the set satisfies the three conditions above. I will turn to sufficiency in the next subsection.

4.2.1. Comparability

I have claimed in section 3 that an option increases the self-expressive value of a set only if it differs in a meaningful way from one’s best option in the set. If an individual is able to compare two options all-things-considered (i.e. the relationship between the two options satisfies *comparability*), this implies that she judges them to be alternatives in the relevant sense of the word – different from each other in a meaningful way. If, in contrast, she cannot compare two options all-things-considered, she chooses between them by plumping – she selects an option that she has no reason to pick (outside practical considerations) (Chang 2015). In these latter cases, the act of choosing does not amount to an act of reasoned selection that results from weighing one’s cares and concerns. Since the act of choosing between two incomparable options does not provide the chooser with a way to express herself, the unchosen alternative does not increase the self-expressive value of the set. So, the availability of an alternative increases the self-expressive value of a set only if it can be compared with the all-things-considered best in the set. Put differently, the alternative increases the self-expressive value of the set only if the

¹⁵I purposely leave open the specific way in which cares and concerns aggregate to form a person’s all-things-considered preferences. Regardless of the specific aggregation procedure used, it seems plausible that, if all the specific cares and concerns of a person rank an alternative as worse than another, then any valid aggregation procedure will rank the former all-things-considered worse than the latter.

¹⁶I will elucidate in section 5 why the lack of correspondence between this condition and the asymmetric binary relation postulated in the standard economic framework is not problematic.

relationship between the alternative and the all-things-considered best satisfies *comparability*.¹⁷

4.2.2. Absence of indifference

Recall: an option increases the self-expressive value of a set only if it differs in a meaningful way from one's best option in the set. When a person deems two options indifferent to each other, she judges them equally good (see the two instances in which this occurs above) and is willing to pick – choose arbitrarily – either. If the person valued expressing herself by choosing between the two, she would not be willing to delegate the choice to the toss of a coin (or any tool that guarantees arbitrary selection). As such, the willingness to choose arbitrarily between two options entails that the person does not deem these different in a way meaningful for her self-expression. So, an available alternative increases the self-expressive value of a set only if it is not judged indifferent to the all-things-considered best in the set. Put differently, the alternative increases the self-expressive value of the set only if the relationship between the alternative and the all-things-considered best in the set satisfies *absence of indifference*.

My description of indifference has two implications. First, the availability of an alternative to which one is all-things-considered indifferent in the second sense above¹⁸ does not increase the self-expressive value of the set by allowing one to express a *specific* care and concern. Second, while picking between options to which one is indifferent can contribute to the formation of a person's identity, doing so is not self-expressive.

To better understand why the two implications follow from my description of all-things-considered indifference, consider the following. A person is all-things-considered indifferent between *Americano* and *Espresso* even if her care as an Italian ranks *Espresso* better, and her care as a scholar *Americano*. Think of two considerations that may cast doubt on my claim. The first is that, even if the two drinks are equal all-things-considered, the availability of *Espresso* (*Americano*) increases the self-expressive value of a set where the other drink is present since it allows a person to express her identity as an Italian (a scholar). The second consideration is that picking one option over the other may contribute to the formation of the person's identity, reinforcing her cares as an Italian or as a scholar.

Both considerations are misguided. I understand all-things-considered indifference between alternatives as a disposition to pick – choose arbitrarily – between them. If the person in the example were to value expressing her cares

¹⁷All-things-considered incomparability is different from cases in which a person evaluates neither option better or worse than the other but is not indifferent between them (see examples of these cases in Raz (1986: 322) and Chang (2012), for instance). In these latter cases, a person creates reasons for herself to choose an option *over* the rejected one(s) (Chang 2012). By so doing, the balance of her cares and concerns relevant to the choice at hand tips in favour of the selected option. This exercise of deliberation and reason creation eventually leads the person to form an all-things-considered preference between options that is instantiated in an actual disposition to choose. Thus, the cases illustrated by Raz (1986: 322) and Chang (2012) do not offer a counterargument to comparability as a necessary condition.

¹⁸This is, an all-things-considered indifference resulting from the aggregation of different rankings of the alternative by one's cares and concerns.

through choice, she would not be willing to choose arbitrarily. Thus, she would not be indifferent between the two drinks. But, since she is willing to pick her drink, this implies that she does not value expressing one of her two identities *through* choice.¹⁹ The second consideration is also misguided. It conflates choosing in a way that may end up shaping one's identity and choosing in a self-expressive way. While, say, picking Espresso may ultimately shape the person's identity, this does not entail that the act itself is self-expressive. Shaping one's identity would only be a coincidental consequence of picking. When picking Espresso, the person is not expressing anything about herself through choice (she may just as well pick Americano). The fact that drinking Espresso may later contribute to reinforcing the person's identity as an Italian does not therefore imply that the *act* of picking Espresso expresses something about her at the moment of choice.

4.2.3. *Absence of dominated worseness*

To show why an option that is dominatedly worse than another cannot increase the self-expressive value of a set, consider the following. Bob ranks being beaten to death dominatedly worse than living a fulfilling life: all his cares and concerns (aggregated or unified into an all-things-considered preference) rank the former over the latter. This means that Bob does not form an all-things-considered preference between the two options by weighing the cares and concerns that rank living a fulfilling life better than being beaten against those that rank being beaten better. *None* of Bob's cares and concerns rank being beaten over living a fulfilling life. And so, being beaten is not a choice that Bob could make if he were to weigh (deliberate on, aggregate and resolve) the relative importance of his cares and concerns differently. There is no way in which, by weighing (deliberating on, aggregating and resolving) his cares and concerns differently, he could have chosen to be beaten. As a result, rejecting being beaten does not provide Bob with an opportunity to express himself that is different from (*and therefore additional to*) the opportunity that is provided by simply embracing his all-things-considered best option, to live a fulfilling life.

Let me consider two criticisms.

First, one may object that, exactly because Bob loves life, rejecting the option of being beaten to death seems a way of expressing his love for life. And this could apply to similar cases of dominatedly worse options. This is not an objection to my argument. Rejecting being beaten to death does not provide Bob with a *further* opportunity to express himself than the one that is already provided by embracing a fulfilling life. It does not provide him with an opportunity to express his weighing and prioritizing of cares and concerns that is different from (*and additional to*) that of choosing a fulfilling life. It, therefore, does not *increase* his self-expression.

A second objection may go as follows. Consider Chris, who deems steak dominatedly worse than his optimal alternative on a dinner menu, noodles with tofu. His three cares and concerns appropriate for the situation at hand (sustainability, care for animals and love for food) rank noodles over steak. While steak is dominatedly worse than noodles, its availability seems to increase the self-expressive value of the set

¹⁹As remarked in section 3, I am not suggesting that the availability of one of the two options does not increase a person's freedom. I am arguing that it does not increase self-expressive value.

where noodles are available. Rejecting the steak provides him with a further opportunity to express himself: he can express himself *in opposition* to the values conveyed by the steak. This objection is less problematic than it appears. The case of Chris is a case in which the availability of the dominatedly worse option increases his self-expression *conditionally* on existing societal values. By rejecting a dominatedly worse alternative, he can express himself *in opposition* to the societal values embodied by it. The availability of steak increases Chris's self-expression because other people in society, to whom he wants to stand in opposition, would prefer steak. In a society without meat lovers, however, it is doubtful that the steak would increase the self-expressive value of the set. Chris values steak in a meat-loving society to make a statement about his values. But it is precisely in virtue of the cares and concerns that he expresses by rejecting the steak that he would not value the availability of steak in a non-meat loving society.²⁰

To summarize, I have argued that an alternative increases the self-expressive value of a set only if it is all-things-considered *comparable to, not indifferent to and not dominatedly worse than* the all-things-considered best in the set. The satisfaction of the first two conditions is entailed by the satisfaction of formal requirements on the all-things-considered preference relation between alternatives as understood in economic theory. The satisfaction of the third can be verified by knowing little more than a person's all-things-considered preferences.

4.3. Comparability, absence of indifference and of dominated worseness: sufficient conditions

Let me argue that when an option is *all-things-considered comparable to, not indifferent to and not dominatedly worse than* a person's best option in the set, its availability increases the self-expressive value of the set.

To convince the reader of the plausibility of these conditions as being jointly sufficient, it is crucial to consider all-things-considered preferences and the resulting choices in greater detail. When an individual forms an all-things-considered preference between two options, she deliberates on how the two stand in relation to each other, and creates reasons for herself as to why she prefers (and is disposed to choose) one alternative over the other. In doing so, she considers the different cares and concerns aggregated or unified to form the all-things-considered preference between the two options. She deliberates over the different aspects of the alternatives and decides for herself why she wants to reject the alternatives she does not choose, and why she wants to be identified with her chosen one(s). This kind of deliberation, aggregation and resolution is key to adjudicating whether an option contributes to the self-expressive value of a set.

I have outlined in section 3 that the availability of an alternative increases the self-expressive value of a set when the person judges it different from her all-things-considered best in a set in a way that is meaningful for her self-expression. And, I have explained, this happens when rejecting the options allows the person to reject

²⁰While this counterargument does not undermine the conceptual validity of my proposal, it points to interesting future research on the relationship between the contribution of an option to self-expressive value and existing societal norms.

alternative versions of the person she is, which would have resulted from deliberating on, aggregating and resolving her cares and concerns differently. Therefore, the availability of an alternative does not increase self-expressive value if this process of deliberation, aggregation and resolution does not occur or is not relevant. And the process does not occur or is not relevant only when the relationship between the alternative and the all-things-considered best in the set does not satisfy the three conditions above. Or so I argue below. This will support the thesis that *comparability*, *absence of indifference* and *absence of dominated worseness* are sufficient conditions.

I will not provide a formal proof of sufficiency. Rather, I will limit myself to illustrate the implausibility that there can be cases in which a person judges an option better or non-dominatedly worse than her all-things-considered best in the set and, yet, this option does not increase the self-expressive value of the set. To do so, it is enough to remind the reader of the following. The evaluation of an option as all-things-considered better or not dominatedly worse than the all-things-considered best in the set results from deliberating on, aggregating and resolving the different cares and concerns conveyed by the two alternatives. This means that a person's all-things-considered preference synthesizes the judgment of which cares and concerns best represent her. My argument shows that when an alternative can be compared to the all-things-considered best and this comparison does not entail *dominated worseness* or *indifference*, its availability increases the self-expressive value of the set.

5. Preference-based freedom rankings: a way out of the impasse

I claimed in Section 1 that it is unnecessary to rely on reasonable preferences to overcome CAP. I here argue for this claim. I show that freedom rankings based on a person's all-things-considered preferences do not suffer from CAP if they account for self-expressive value.

Before turning to the remainder of the section, it is important to clarify what I mean by a preference-based freedom ranking that accounts for self-expressive value. I put forward a formal approach that is compatible with a class of families of value-based approaches to freedom (i.e. all preference-based approaches that measure the freedom that a person enjoys as partly dependent on self-expressive value and use one's all-things-considered preferences to measure it).

In this section, I proceed in two stages. I first draw on the example at the beginning of the article and illustrate that the same freedom ranking (using the same source of information) can successfully deal with CAP if it accounts for self-expressive value. Hence, the exclusion of Bob's adaptive preferences from the reference set of his preferences is unnecessary to overcome CAP. Then, I show that my argument holds water beyond this specific example.

Consider again:

	Bob's preferences	Options available to Bob
Job 1	Doctor P Farmer	$C_1 = \{\text{Doctor, Farmer}\}$
Job 2	Farmer P Doctor	$C_2 = \{\text{Farmer}\}$

CAP demands that the freedom ranking of the sets of alternatives in **Job 1** and **Job 2** does not change as a result of Bob's preference adaptation. So, the freedom ranking should be $C_1 \succ C_2$ both along Bob's non-adaptive preferences and his adaptive ones.

To show why accounting for self-expressive value enables preference-based rankings to meet CAP, I will draw on Puppe and Xu's (2010) freedom ranking, with no loss of generality (see section 2). I define the set of essential alternatives as all the alternatives that contribute to Bob's self-expression. I use Bob's all-things-considered preferences to delineate them. As I will show, both when the set of essential alternatives is defined on information derived from Bob's all-things-considered non-adaptive preferences (**Job 1**) and when it is defined on information from his adaptive preferences (**Job 2**): $C_1 \succ C_2$.

Let me first consider the case in which the set of essential elements is defined over Bob's all-things-considered non-adaptive preferences and then that in which it is based on his adaptive ones.

It is self-evident that, if Puppe and Xu's (2010) freedom ranking accounts for self-expressive value on the basis of information derived from Bob's *non-adaptive* preferences in **Job 1**, it ranks C_1 strictly higher than C_2 . C_1 contains two essential elements, while C_2 only one.²¹

By accounting for self-expressive value, Puppe and Xu's freedom ranking ranks C_1 strictly higher than C_2 also on the basis of information derived from Bob's all-things-considered *adaptive preferences*. As I will illustrate, C_1 contains two essential elements, and C_2 only one, also along Bob's *adaptive preferences*. This is because Farmer and Doctor can be compared, they are not indifferent to each other, and, I will show, Doctor is not dominatedly worse than Farmer according to Bob's *adaptive preferences*.

Comparability and *absence of indifference* are trivially satisfied by Bob's all-things-considered adaptive preferences. Doctor is all-things-considered worse than Farmer. The two alternatives are hence comparable (*comparability*) and not indifferent to each other (*absence of indifference*).

The satisfaction of *absence of dominated worseness* depends on whether, according to Bob's adaptive preferences, Doctor is dominatedly worse than Farmer. Checking the satisfaction of this condition standardly requires knowing an individual's cares and concerns (aggregated or unified to form the all-things-considered preference). In the specific case of adaptive preferences, however, this knowledge is unnecessary. In fact, as I will explain shortly, prominent understandings of adaptive preferences in the philosophical literature explicitly or implicitly grant the satisfaction of *absence of dominated worseness*. This means that an option that is downgraded as a result of one's preference adaptation is not dominatedly worse than the adaptively all-things-considered best.

Let me elucidate this by considering the different understandings of adaptive preferences in three main literatures: those on (a) autonomy (Elster 1983; Bovens 1992; Colburn 2011), (b) self-deception (Taylor 2013) and (c) decision theory (Welsch 2005). Despite their differences (Khader 2009; Dorsey 2017), they all entail the satisfaction of *absence of dominated worseness*, implicitly or explicitly.

²¹Formally, $\#E(C_1 \cup C_2) \cap C_1 = 2 > \#E[(C_1 \cup C_2)] \cap C_2 = 1$. Hence, $C_1 \succ C_2$.

For Bovens (1992: 73–74), adaptive preferences result from improper arbitration of all criterial judgments in favour of an alternative over another. So, the ranking of options according to each criterial judgement remains unchanged.²² For Elster (1983), an individual who adapts her preferences would still choose her non-adaptively preferred option if this were available. This implies that the ranking of options according to her cares and concerns remains unchanged. Colburn (2011) argues that people who adapt their preferences learn to change the aspects of the alternatives that they prioritize. So, again, the ranking of alternatives according to each aspect (equivalent to what I call ‘care and concern’) remains unchanged. Taylor (2013) defines adaptive preferences similarly to Elster (1983), but allows for the possibility that they result from a conscious process of self-deception (while for Elster adaptive preferences always form unconsciously). This implies that the ranking of alternatives along one’s cares and concerns has not changed. Welsch (2005) models adaptive preferences as the result of a person changing the relative ‘emphasis’ that she attributes to the different goals she has. Just like Colburn (2011), he assumes that the ranking of each alternative according to one’s cares and concerns does not change – only the weight attributed to each care and concern does.

Crucially, under all these understandings, Bob does not change the way in which the specific cares and concerns evaluate the options. According to Colburn and Welsch, he only changes how he deliberates about and trades off his cares and concerns. According to Bovens, Elster and Taylor, he does not change it all. For Bovens, he simply arbitrates improperly among his cares and concerns. For Taylor and Elster, he *claims* to prefer the adaptively preferred option to the non-adaptively preferred one, but in fact does not, since he would choose the latter if available. All understandings of adaptive preferences share the following feature: even along Bob’s adaptive preferences, some cares and concerns evaluate Doctor better than Farmer. Doctor is thus not ranked dominatedly worse than Farmer and *absence of dominated worseness* is satisfied.²³

Bob’s all-things-considered adaptive preferences between Doctor and Farmer do not entail indifference and do not judge Doctor dominatedly worse than Farmer. If the essential alternatives in the union of C_1 and C_2 (intersected with C_1 and C_2 , respectively) are the alternatives that are comparable, not indifferent and not dominatedly worse than the best alternative in the set according to Bob’s all-things-considered *adaptive preferences*, then $C_1 > C_2$, according to Puppe and Xu’s (2010) freedom ranking.²⁴

²²Bovens uses ‘criterial judgement’ similarly to ‘cares and concerns’.

²³One might object that there are other ways to understand adaptive preferences that are not so congenial to my purposes. Bradley (2017: 200, 207), for instance, defines preferences as adaptive when a person changes her evaluation of the desirability of alternatives based on the likelihood of getting the desired consequences. Note that such a definition does not clash with my characterization of adaptive preferences, since, under Bradley’s account, a person does not change how her cares and concerns rank the alternatives available to her. Rather, the weight attributed to these cares and concerns changes. A different definition of adaptive preferences can be found in feminist literature (see e.g. Khader 2009; Christman 2014; Stoljar 2014). These scholars use the term adaptive preferences to describe a phenomenon that differs from the one I describe here. At the end of section 5, I will call this phenomenon one of higher-order adaptation, and argue that it occurs on a different level.

²⁴Formally, $\#[E(C_1 \cup C_2)] \cap C_1 = 2 > \#[E(C_1 \cup C_2)] \cap C_2 = 1$. Hence, $C_1 > C_2$.

As such, if the essential alternatives in Puppe and Xu's (2010) freedom ranking are identified as those that increase self-expressive value, the ranking stays $C_1 > C_2$, irrespective of whether the preferences used as an informational basis are adaptive.

My argument holds water beyond the specific example of Bob. Freedom rankings that are based on a person's all-things-considered preferences and account for self-expressive value are immune to CAP. Even if these rankings are based on a person's all-things-considered adaptive preferences, they rank the set that contains one's non-adaptively favourite option(s) as offering more freedom than that without it (them). The reason is that, in my framework, an alternative increases the self-expressive value of a set if the relationship between that alternative and the best in the set satisfies the three conditions above. And adaptive preferences (between one's non-adaptively preferred option and one's adaptively preferred option) satisfy these three conditions. So, preference-based freedom rankings defined on all-things-considered preferences can deal with CAP without needing to individuate a reference set of reasonable preferences. There is thus a way to escape the impasse that either preference-based freedom rankings cannot escape CAP or they can at the cost of demanding conceptual, epistemic and empirical assumptions.

Let me close by discussing the reach of my proposal.

As I have clarified in the sections above, delineating the self-expressive value of a choice set standardly requires more knowledge than that of a person's all-things-considered preferences (except for the case of adaptive preferences). While this illuminates that knowledge of one's all-things-considered preferences is not sufficient to develop a preference-based freedom ranking that accounts for self-expressive value, it is important to stress two things. First, the knowledge required is much more limited than that needed when delineating reasonable preferences (see section 2). Second, the fact that additional limited knowledge is required does not undermine the claim that all-things-considered preferences can be used as an informational basis for preference-based freedom rankings in a much more uncontroversial way than usually assumed.

Another remark concerns phenomena of higher-order adaptation. These occur when a person deems an (unavailable) option dominatedly worse given how society has shaped the cares and concerns she holds. The availability of options that are dominatedly worse due to higher-order adaptation may contribute to a person's freedom, and yet not increase a person's self-expression.²⁵ While accounting for self-expressive value provides preference-based freedom rankings with a way to escape CAP, it does not allow preference-based freedom rankings to elude another challenge, which is that of higher-order adaptation. Cases of higher-order adaptation are best understood as a distinct phenomenon from that of adaptive preferences. Theorists working on the topic (Khader 2009; Christman 2014; Stoljar 2014) define them as a result of one's adaptation to (or coping mechanism with) one's oppressive environment. They usually understand this phenomenon as the non-autonomous adaptation of one's desires to those oppressive conditions.²⁶ They

²⁵Think of a woman in a conservative society who judges a mini-skirt dominatedly worse than a long prudish dress.

²⁶This is partly controversial. Khader (2009), for instance, argues that the formation of preferences that are adaptive to one's environment is best understood as an autonomous process.

thus describe a phenomenon that is distinct and occurs on a different level. For this reason, I take it that phenomena of higher-order adaptation do not highlight a limitation to the framework I have developed, which addresses CAP. These phenomena however cast light on other challenges that preference-based freedom rankings can be vulnerable to.

6. Conclusion

I have debunked the ingrained assumption that reliance on all-things-considered preferences makes preference-based freedom rankings necessarily vulnerable to CAP. It does not, as long as preference-based freedom rankings account for self-expressive value. This does not imply, however, that freedom rankings that use a person's all-things-considered preferences are necessarily immune to other challenges, such as those of higher-order adaptation.

Restoring the legitimacy of all-things-considered preferences in the freedom ranking literature allows using a notion of preferences that is substantively and epistemically less demanding than that of reasonable preferences as a foundation for preference-based freedom rankings. This has important implications both for the conceptual analysis of freedom in political philosophy and the actual practice of ranking sets in terms of freedom in social choice theory. Conceptually, it shows that preference-based accounts of freedom do not necessarily suffer from the well-known CAP. As I have argued, all-things-considered preferences (be they adaptive or not) can be used to evaluate whether an alternative contributes to a person's self-expression. On a more practical level, showing that preference-based freedom rankings that use all-things-considered preferences do not suffer from CAP implies that there is no need to individuate and correct for adaptive preferences. This allows operationalizing freedom rankings by using less demanding assumptions, thus basing them on less controversial foundations.

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Annalisa Costella is a PhD candidate at the Erasmus Institute for Philosophy and Economics (EIPE), Erasmus School of Philosophy, and Erasmus University. Her research focuses on the non-instrumental value of freedom and decision-making. She works at the intersection of decision theory and political philosophy, with a broader interest in theories of instrumental and practical rationality as well as philosophy of action. URL: <https://www.eur.nl/en/people/annalisa-costella>.