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THE FITTING-ATTITUDE ANALYSIS OF VALUE RELATIONS AND THE PREFERENCES VS. VALUE JUDGEMENTS OBJECTION

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Abstract: According to Wlodek Rabinowicz's (2008) fitting-attitude analysis of value relations, two items are on a par if and only if it is both permissible to strictly prefer one to the other and permissible to have the opposite strict preference. Rabinowicz's account is subject, however, to one important objection: if strict preferences involve betterness judgements, then his analysis contrasts with the intuitive understanding of parity. In this paper, I examine Rabinowicz's three responses to this objection and argue that they do not succeed. I then propose an alternative solution. I argue that the objection can be avoided if we 'relativize' Rabinowicz's account and define parity in terms of opposite strict preferences between two items that are only relatively permissible, rather than permissible simpliciter. I argue that this account of parity can be defended if we take seriously the distinction between sufficient and decisive reason for a preference relation. I also show that, on the basis of this distinction, we can arrive at a more extensive taxonomy of value relations than the one proposed by Rabinowicz.

Keywords: Parity, Value relations, Fitting-attitude analysis of value, Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection, Wlodek Rabinowicz

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Trichotomy Thesis about value relations, there exist only three ways in which different items can be compared in terms of value: one item can be either better than, or as good as, or worse than another.

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In recent years, however, several philosophers have raised some doubts about this thesis. Some (e.g. Raz 1986) have claimed that the relevant items can also be incomparable in terms of value. Others (e.g. Chang 1997, 2002) have argued that there exists an additional positive value relation, i.e. parity, which holds between two items when none of the trichotomous value relations holds, but when these items are nonetheless comparable.

The previous claims raise several *substantive* questions. Is the Trichotomy Thesis true? Are there actual cases of value incomparability or is it always possible to positively compare different items in terms of value? Does parity exist? In addition, they also raise important *conceptual* questions. What do we mean by parity? Can we make sense of all the positive value relations as well as of value incomparability? In other words, can we provide a plausible analysis of the value concepts employed to talk about value relations? This paper is concerned with the latter set of questions. More specifically, my goal is to examine the analysis of value relations put forward by Wlodek Rabinowicz in a series of recent articles (Rabinowicz 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012)[1] and to discuss a powerful objection raised against it, i.e. the so-called 'Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection'.

The objection specifically targets Rabinowicz's (2008) account of parity. According to the latter, two items are on a par if and only if it is both permissible to strictly prefer one to the other and permissible to have the opposite strict preference. However, if preferences involve comparative value judgements, Rabinowicz's account implies that two items are on a par if and only if it is both permissible to judge that one is better than the other and permissible to have the opposite judgement. This is in contrast with the intuitive understanding of parity, according to which, when one judges that two items are on a par, one recognizes that neither is better than the other.

Rabinowicz (2009, 2011, 2012) has offered three different responses to the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection. In this paper, I will argue that none of them ultimately succeed. I will then propose an alternative solution. I will argue that the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection can be avoided if we 'relativize' Rabinowicz's account and define parity in terms of opposite strict preferences between two items that are only *relatively* permissible, rather than permissible *simpliciter*. I will defend this account against the objection that it collapses into Rabinowicz's own account by providing a different interpretation of Rabinowicz's overall framework, based on the distinction between decisive and sufficient reason for a particular preference relation. I will also show that, on the basis of this distinction, we can arrive at a more extensive taxonomy of

[1] Rabinowicz develops, and substantially modifies, a line of thought originally proposed by Joshua Gert (2004). Since Gert's proposal has been somewhat refuted by both Chang (2005) and Rabinowicz (2008), in what follows I shall only focus on Rabinowicz's FA-analysis.

value relations than the one proposed by Rabinowicz. In particular, I will identify four different types of parity relations: strict parity, quasi-strict parity, rough parity and weak parity.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, I shall present Rabinowicz's initial analysis of value relations. In Section 3, I shall illustrate the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection, examine the solutions proposed by Rabinowicz, and raise some objections against them. In Section 4, I shall present and defend my own solution to the objection. I will conclude in Section 5.

2. RABINOWICZ'S FITTING-ATTITUDE ANALYSIS OF VALUE RELATIONS

Rabinowicz's account is an attempt to characterize value relations within the framework of the Fitting-Attitude (FA henceforth)-analysis of value (Brentano 1889; Ewing 1947; Gibbard 1990; Scanlon 1998; Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004). In the non-comparative case, the FA-analysis holds that an item is valuable if and only if that item is a fitting object of a favouring attitude. The concept of value is thus analysed in terms of a normative component, captured by the notion of 'fittingness', and a psychological component, captured by the notion of 'favouring'.[2]

Rabinowicz's initial account of comparative value is laid down in 'Value Relations' (2008). It is based on four claims. The first states the generic FA-thesis about comparative value. It says that comparative value judgements are equivalent to normative assessments of preferences. The second concerns the normative component of the analysis. According to it, fittingness has two levels, i.e. the level of 'permissibility' and the level of 'requiredness'. The third and the fourth concern the psychological component of the analysis. Rabinowicz maintains, on the one hand, that preferences are dyadic attitudes, i.e. attitudes in favour of one item over another; and, on the other hand, that they are choice dispositions, i.e. dispositions to choose one item over another.

Rabinowicz begins by offering an *informal* FA-analysis of value relations. He characterizes the standard trichotomy of value relations in the following way. For any options x and y:

(B) x is *better* than y if and only if it is required to strictly prefer x to y.
(W) x is *worse* than y if and only if it is required to strictly prefer y to x.
(E) x is *equally good* as y if and only if it is required to be indifferent between x and y.

[2] Different versions conceive of these components in different ways. For instance, 'fittingness' is taken to be either a primitive normative notion or a placeholder for other, supposedly deontic, notions such as 'right', 'appropriate', 'required', 'ought', etc. Likewise, 'favouring' covers the more or less broad spectrum of pro-attitudes that are supposed to be connected to value.

Next, Rabinowicz offers a characterization of parity. As mentioned above, parity is supposed to hold between two items when neither is better than the other, nor equally good, and yet the two items are comparable in terms of value. Within Rabinowicz's FA-analysis, parity is defined as follows.

> (P) *x* is *on a par* with *y* if and only if it is both permissible to strictly prefer *x* to *y* and permissible to strictly prefer *y* to *x*.

Finally, Rabinowicz offers an FA-analysis of value incomparability.

> (I) *x* is *incomparable* to *y* if and only if it is required to neither strictly prefer one to the other nor be indifferent between the two.

One question immediately arises. According to (I), two items are incomparable if and only if one is required to have no preferential attitudes towards them. Since preferences are conceived of as choice dispositions, it follows that one is required to have no choice dispositions towards these items. This seems to imply that one cannot be disposed to make any choice among incomparable items. However, choice involving incomparable items does seem to be possible. Moreover, choice is always the result of some dispositions. The question is: How can we make sense of the behaviour of a subject who judges two items to be incomparable – and, thus, judges that lacking a choice disposition towards these items is required – and, yet, makes a choice between them on the basis of some choice dispositions? One possibility is that the subject is irrational, i.e. she has choice dispositions that she judges impermissible to have. However, this explanation does not seem to correctly describe all cases of choice between incomparable items. Indeed, such choices do not seem to necessarily manifest any form of irrationality. An alternative possibility consists in distinguishing between different sorts of choice dispositions. This is the strategy pursued by Rabinowicz.

Rabinowicz distinguishes between choice dispositions in a narrow sense, i.e. roughly, choice dispositions that are based on the balance of reasons, and choice dispositions in a broad sense, i.e. roughly, all choice dispositions that are involved in choice-making, whether or not they are based on the balance of reasons. According to Rabinowicz, what matters for an FA-analysis of value relations are choice dispositions of the former type. The analysis of value incomparability should thus be interpreted accordingly: judging that two items are incomparable is equivalent to judging that the balancing of reasons does not succeed, so that one is required not to adopt any preferential attitude towards these items (see Rabinowicz 2012: 140). This analysis is still compatible with the possibility that the subject makes a choice between the items on the basis of some choice disposition. However, her choice stems from a choice disposition that is not based on the balance of reasons, but is the result of some other physical or psychological features of the individual (see Raz 1986 on the same point).[3]

Rabinowicz provides also a more *formal* interpretation of his FA-analysis. The starting point is the observation that, when we compare different items in terms of value, we typically make reference to several dimensions with respect to which such items can be evaluated. In some cases, these dimensions can be weighed against each other in a number of different, yet equally legitimate, ways. Formally, this means that, in such cases, there exist several vectors of weights, which can be applied to the dimensions relevant for comparison in an equally justified way. If we think of each of these dimensions as a different 'reason' for preferring one item to another, it follows that there exist different ways in which reasons can be balanced. This generates a whole set of permissible preference orderings, i.e. a set of different ways in which different items can be legitimately ordered on the basis of the balance of reasons. The set of permissible preference orderings constitutes the basis for Rabinowicz's formal FA-analysis of value relations.

According to Rabinowicz, each value relation can be defined in terms of the *intersection* of all the permissible preference orderings. More formally, suppose that K is the (non-empty) class of all the permissible preference orderings. Rabinowicz assumes that, within K, weak preference (that is, the union of strict preference and indifference) is reflexive and transitive, but not necessarily a complete relation. This allows for the existence of preferential gaps between items. According to Rabinowicz, there are 15 logically possible ways in which two items can be related within K. That is, there are 15 logically possible value relations. Rabinowicz summarizes them by means of the table in Figure 1 (Rabinowicz 2012: 147).

As Rabinowicz explains,

> each column specifies one type of value relation that can obtain between two items; i.e., each column specifies one possible combination of rationally permissible kinds of preference relations between the items. There are four kinds of such relations to consider: preferring ($\succ$), indifference ($\approx$), dispreferring ($\prec$) and a gap (/), where the latter stands for the absence of a preferential attitude. There is a plus sign in each column for every preference relation between the items that is rationally permissible in that evaluative

[3] Notice that, if we conceive rationality as a proper response to reasons, then having this choice disposition is not *ir*-rational, but, at most, *a*-rational. It is worth noticing that authors such as Raz (1986) would deny even this, i.e. they would maintain that choice between incomparable items is rational even when the subject's preference for one item over another is not based on a reason to prefer the former item to the latter. For the subject's choice to count as rational, it is sufficient that it be based on a non-comparative reason to want the chosen item, i.e. a consideration in favour of that item, rather than on a comparative reason for wanting the chosen item *more than* the other.

type. There must be at least one plus sign in each column, since for any two items at least one kind of preference relation between these items must be permissible. (Rabinowicz 2008: 42)

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

FIGURE 1. Summary of the 15 logically possible value relations (Rabinowicz 2012: 147).

Rabinowicz is thus able to offer a complete taxonomy of value relations. The standard trichotomy of value relations is characterized as follows. For any two items *x* and *y*:

(B) *x* is *better* than *y* if and only if *x* is strictly preferred to *y* in *every* ordering in *K*.
(W) *x* is *worse* than *y* if and only if *x* is strictly dis-preferred to *y* in *every* ordering in *K*.
(E) *x* is *equally good* as *y* if and only if *x* is indifferent to *y* in *every* ordering in *K*.

The notion of incomparability is characterized as follows:

(I) *x* is *incomparable* to *y* if and only if *every* ordering in *K* contains a preferential gap between *x* and *y*.

Parity is defined as follows:

(P) *x* is *on a par* with *y* if and only if *x* is strictly preferred to *y* in *some* ordering in *K* and *y* is strictly preferred to *x* in *some other* ordering in *K*.

It is worth noticing that parity so defined is not only represented by column 6 in the table. Indeed, there are other cases where the conditions listed by (P) are satisfied. For instance, these are cases where *x* is strictly preferred to *y* in some ordering in *K*, *y* is strictly preferred to *x* in some other ordering in *K*, and *x* is permissibly related to *y* by some other preferential attitudes in other orderings in *K*. Columns 7, 8 and 9 in the table represent such cases. Clearly, these combinations, as well as the others in the table, may have no actual instantiations, but be only conceptual possibilities. An analysis should nonetheless make room for them – a constraint that Rabinowicz's account fully respects.

3. THE PREFERENCES VS. VALUE JUDGEMENTS OBJECTION

As Rabinowicz himself recognizes, his initial FA-analysis of value relations is subject to various objections.[4] In this paper I focus on one of them in particular, namely, the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection. The objection is the following.

According to Rabinowicz's informal account, two items are on a par if and only if it is both permissible to strictly prefer one to the other and permissible to have the opposite strict preference. The problem is that, if preferences are conceived of as mental states that necessarily involve a comparative value judgement,[5] then Rabinowicz's account entails that two items are on a par if and only if it is both permissible to judge that one is better than the other and permissible to have the opposite judgement. However, this is in contrast with the intuitive understanding of parity, according to which, when two items are on a par, neither is better than (nor equally good to) the other.

Rabinowicz notices that the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection does not arise only with respect to a conception of preferences in terms of comparative *value* judgements. In fact, the objection remains even if preferences are conceived of as mental states involving comparative *reason* judgements.[6] Indeed, Rabinowicz's account implies that, if two items are on a par, it is both permissible to judge that one is supported by stronger reasons than the other and permissible to have the opposite judgement. Once again, however, this claim contrasts with the intuitive understanding of parity, according to which, when two items are on a par, neither is supported by stronger reasons. The scope of the objection is thus broader than one might have initially thought.

In fact, Rabinowicz interprets the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection in two slightly different ways. On the one hand, he sees the

[4] Rabinowicz identifies four main objections: (1) 'Analyticity', (2) 'Elusiveness of Incomparability', (3) 'Preferences vs. Value Judgments', and (4) 'Domain of Preference'. He thoroughly discusses these objections in 'Value Relations, Old Wine in New Barrels' (2011) and in 'Value Relations Revisited' (2012).

[5] For simplicity, in what follows I will generally omit the term 'necessarily'.

[6] For this reason, one cannot respond to the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection simply by claiming that one should ban non-reductive FA-analyses, i.e. analyses that contain value terms in the *analysans*, for instance on the ground that such analyses are circular. Another reason not to exclude non-reductive FA-analyses is the fact, as Rabinowicz himself notices (Rabinowicz 2009: 93), that circular analyses, i.e. conceptual elucidations, may actually be informative, at least to the extent that they reveal interesting connections between concepts. Amongst the authors defending non-reductive versions of the FA-analysis, see McDowell (1985) and Tappolet (2000).

objection as raising a '*consistency problem*'.[7] Suppose that an agent judges that two items *x* and *y* are on a par. Suppose also that the agent forms a strict preference for *x* over *y*, as it is permissible for her to do in light of Rabinowicz's analysis of parity. If preferences involve a comparative value judgement, then, by forming a strict preference for *x* over *y*, the agent forms the judgement that *x* is better than *y*. However, this judgement is inconsistent with the judgement entailed by the intuitive understanding of parity, according to which, when one judges that two items are on a par, one recognizes that neither item is better than (nor equally good to) the other. The question is the following: For any two items *x* and *y* that are on a par, how can an agent *consistently* prefer *x* to *y*, and, thus, judge that *x* is better than *y*, while, at the same time, denying that *x* is better than *y*?

On the other hand, Rabinowicz sees the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection as raising a more '*substantive problem*'.[8] As we have seen, if preferences involve a comparative value judgement, his analysis entails that, when two items *x* and *y* are on a par, it is permissible to judge, e.g. that *x* is better than *y*. According to the intuitive understanding of parity, however, this is an *incorrect* judgement, since neither item is better than (nor equally good to) the other. The question arises: How can it be *permissible* for an agent to prefer *x* to *y*, and, thus, to judge that *x* is better than *y*, if the latter judgement is *incorrect*, given that, as a matter of fact, when *x* is on a par with *y*, *x* is *not* better than *y*?

Rabinowicz has explored three different solutions to the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection, in a series of recent papers (2009, 2011, 2012). In the rest of this section, I shall present, and raise some doubts about, each of these solutions. While assessing them, it is important to keep in mind the difference between the two versions of the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection, since some of the solutions offered by Rabinowicz work with respect to one version, but not with respect to the other.

[7] This is how Rabinowicz presents the objection in 'Value Relations – Old Wine in New Barrels' (2011: 13) and 'Value Relations Revisited' (2012: 151), where he writes: 'Suppose the agent judges *x* to be on a par with *y*. Given the analysis I have suggested, this implies that, in her opinion, *x* is not better than *y* but preferring *x* to *y* is permissible. However, can she herself, given her judgement of value, have this preference for *x* over *y*, if preference is reason-based? It is not clear that she can, without inconsistency. It would mean that she can deny that *x* is better than *y* but still consistently view reasons in favour of *x* as being stronger than those in favour of *y*. This seems problematic.'

[8] This is how Rabinowicz presents the objection in 'Values Compared' (2009: 88), where he writes: 'If *x* and *y* are on a par, then both the preference for *x* over *y* and the opposite preference are permissible: each of them is ok, so to speak. However, if the preference for *x* involves a judgment that *x* is better than *y*, how *can* it be ok to prefer *x* if *x* is *not* better than *y* (as it can't be if it is on a par with *y*)? How can it be ok to accept a false judgment?'

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Rabinowicz's first solution consists in allowing only for non-judgementalist conceptions of preferences.[9] For instance, one possibility is to conceive of preferences as mental states involving value *perceptions*, rather than value *judgements*. Accordingly, preferring x to y involves perceiving x as better than y, rather than judging x to be better than y. Perceptions are understood here as fallible, possibly non-veridical, experiences. Thus, perceiving one item as better than another does not imply knowing that the former is better than the latter. The analogy is with the perception of a stick immersed in the water. Clearly, one can perceive a stick in the water to be broken and, yet, know that the stick is not actually broken.

This seems to offer a straightforward solution to the first version of the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection. Indeed, if preferences involve value perceptions, then Rabinowicz's account entails that two items are on a par if and only if it is both permissible to perceive one as better than the other and permissible to have the opposite value perception. Since value perceptions do not imply value judgements, it is perfectly possible for one to have either one of these perceptual experiences, while recognizing that neither is veridical and, thereby, while judging that neither item is better than the other. There seems to be no inconsistency here.

However, Rabinowicz's first solution presents two problems. The first is that, insofar as it excludes from the start some independently plausible conceptions of preferences, such as the one in terms of value judgements,[10] it loses generality. The second, and most important, is that it is vulnerable to a variant of the second version of the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection. Let me explain. As we have seen, the 'substantive problem' with Rabinowicz's analysis arises as soon as one notices that there is something puzzling in the claim that it is permissible to have an incorrect value *judgement*. By contrast, Rabinowicz's first solution assumes that there is nothing puzzling in the claim that it is permissible to have an incorrect value *perception*. The question is why. The answer seems to come from the analogy with sensory perceptions. The idea is that, in some circumstances, it is perfectly normal to have non-veridical sensory perceptions, even if one knows that they are incorrect. In turn, this seems to imply that, in those circumstances, it is permissible to have non-veridical sensory perceptions. If the analogy between sensory and value perceptions holds, it follows that, in some circumstances, it may also be permissible to have non-veridical value perceptions.

[9] Rabinowicz explores this solution in 'Values Compared' (2009).
[10] See Hausman (2012) for a defence of this conception of preferences.

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The problem with this line of thought has to do with the inference from 'normality' to 'permissibility'. More precisely, the problem is that the claim that, in some circumstances, it is 'normal' to have non-veridical sensory perceptions does not imply that, in those circumstances, it is 'permissible' to have such perceptions. In fact, sensory perceptions are not mental states that it is permissible or impermissible to have at all. In other words, sensory perceptions are not mental states for which a justification or a reason can be given. Rather, they are mental states which admit only of causal explanations. For instance, in our previous example, it does not make sense to ask for a justification as to why an individual mistakenly perceives a stick in the water as broken. The only thing that we can ask for is a causal explanation as to why she has such a perception – an explanation which, in this case, is readily available: given her visual apparatus, she just could not have perceived the stick differently. This shows that the sense in which it is 'normal', in some circumstances, to have a non-veridical sensory perception is purely descriptive: this is how our perceptual system works in those circumstances.

These considerations provide the basis for the following argument against Rabinowicz's solution to the 'substantive problem'. Either value perceptions are akin to sensory perceptions or they are not. If they are, then value perceptions cannot be based on reasons. As such, it can neither be permissible nor impermissible for one to have value perceptions. A fortiori, it cannot be permissible for one to have non-veridical value perceptions – contrary to what Rabinowicz's solution presupposes. On the other hand, if value perceptions are not like sensory perceptions, in that they can be based on reasons and be assessed as permissible or impermissible, then it is unclear how Rabinowicz's solution addresses the 'substantive problem'. Indeed, the problem seems to reappear in just a slightly different form. Recall that the original question was: 'How can it be permissible to have preferences that involve incorrect value judgements?' The question now becomes: 'How can it be permissible to have preferences that involve incorrect value perceptions?' One can no longer appeal to the analogy with sensory perceptions, since the analogy has broken down. More specifically, one can no longer say that, in the same way as it is normal, in some circumstances, to have non-veridical sensory perceptions, so is it normal, in some circumstances, to have non-veridical value perceptions. The reason is that 'normal' has two different meanings in the two cases, i.e. respectively, a descriptive and a normative meaning. One may of course make reference to the existence of a vector of admissible weights that, when combined with the dimensions relevant for comparison, determines a balance of reasons that makes it permissible to have a non-veridical value perception. However, this only pushes the problem one step back. For the question now becomes: How can an *admissible* vector of weights make it *permissible* to have an *incorrect* value perception?[11] Or, in other words, how can a value perception generated by an admissible vector of weights be itself permissible, if it is non-veridical? We still lack an explanation to this puzzle.

Rabinowicz has offered a second solution to the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection, which he presents as follows:[12]

> [T]he problem of Preferences vs. Value Judgments could be dealt with if we take seriously the idea of different admissible [vectors] of weights for various respects or dimensions of comparison. If the weights are optional to some extent, the resolution of the conflict of reasons which an agent arrives at can go hand in hand with the recognition that this conflict might just as well be resolvable in a different way. Consequently, such an agent might take reasons in favour of x to be stronger than reasons in favour of y, but – to the extent she is aware of the optional nature of this resolution – she can at the same time be willing to deny that x is better than y.

As is clear from this quote, here Rabinowicz focuses on the formulation of the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection in terms of reasons. That is, he works with a conception of preferences according to which these involve reason judgements, rather than value judgements. Rabinowicz's idea is the following. Whenever an agent adopts an admissible vector of weights and applies it to the dimensions relevant for comparison, she arrives at a particular balance of reasons. For instance, when comparing two items x and y with respect to a specific vector of weights, she may arrive at the conclusion that x is supported by stronger reasons than y. This seems to force her to judge that x is better than y. However, to the extent that she realizes that the vector of weights that led her to that balance of reasons is optional, she may also realize that this way of balancing reasons is optional as well and that there may be other optional, but conflicting, ways of balancing reasons. Because of this, she may consistently deny that x is better than y.

Here is a slightly different way of illustrating Rabinowicz's second solution. According to Rabinowicz's FA-analysis, saying that x is better than y is equivalent to saying that one is required to prefer x to y. In turn, if preferences involve comparative reason judgements, saying that one is required to prefer x to y involves saying that one is required to judge that x is supported by stronger reasons than y. But if one is required to judge that x is supported by stronger reasons than y, then it seems that one is also required to judge that x is better than y. Taking this into account, suppose that an agent adopts a specific vector of weights, which leads her to

[11] For instance, if value perceptions are identified with emotions (see, e.g. Tappolet 2000) – so that to say that preferences involve value perceptions is to say that preferences involve emotions – the question is: how can an admissible vector of weights make it be *permissible* to have an *incorrect* emotion?

[12] Rabinowicz explores this solution in 'Value Relations Revisited' (2012).

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prefer x to y. The worry underlying the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection is that, because of this, the agent is required to judge that x is supported by stronger reasons than y. If this is true, then, in light of the previous conditions, it follows that the agent cannot permissibly deny that x is better than y. Against this conclusion, Rabinowicz's solution suggests that if the agent realizes that the vector of weights that determines her preferences is optional, then she can also realize that she is actually not *required* to judge that x is supported by stronger reasons than y, but merely *permitted* to do so. But if it is simply permissible for the agent to judge that x is supported by stronger reasons than y, then she can permissibly deny that x is better than y.

The problem with Rabinowicz's second solution is that, once again, it provides at most a solution to the first version of the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection, but not to the second version. Indeed, even if we grant that his account of parity allows an agent to both prefer x to y and deny that x is better than y, it is still the case that his account makes it *permissible* for an agent to prefer x to y and, thereby, to judge that x is supported by stronger reasons than y. If so, however, the question underlying the 'substantive problem' arises again: How can it be *permissible* for an agent to prefer x to y, and, thus, to judge that x is supported by stronger reasons than y, if the latter judgement is *incorrect*, given that, as a matter of fact, x is *not* supported by stronger reasons than y?[13]

Rabinowicz's third solution involves a modification of his initial FA-account.[14] In particular, Rabinowicz suggests replacing the conception of preferences as dyadic, choice dispositional attitudes, with a conception of preferences as relations between *monadic* attitudes, each admitting of degrees.[15] This conception holds that, for any two items x and y, x is preferred to y if and only if x is favoured to a higher degree than y; x is equi-preferred to y if and only if x is favoured to the same degree as y; and

[13] An anonymous referee has pointed out that Rabinowicz could reply to this objection by saying that the judgement about the strength of reasons that is involved in preferring x to y is 'perspectival', whereas the judgement about the strength of reasons that underlies the claim that x is better than y is not. It follows that the agent can permissibly hold only a 'perspectival' judgement about the strength of reasons, but not a 'non-perspectival' one. In other words, the agent cannot permissibly hold the incorrect 'non-perspectival' judgement that x is supported by stronger reasons than y. Notice that, when it is understood in this sense, Rabinowicz's solution is close in spirit to the one that I will propose in the next section. See, for example, footnote 23.

[14] Rabinowicz explores this solution in in 'Value Relations – Old Wine in New Barrels' (2011) and 'Value Relations Revisited' (2012).

[15] According to Rabinowicz, we can refer to the attitude of 'favouring' as a placeholder for whatever monadic attitude is relevant for value comparisons, e.g. admiration, amusement, etc.

x is in a preferential gap relation with *y* if and only if the degrees to which *x* and *y* are favoured are incommensurable.[16]

Rabinowicz shows that, if we make this modification, we can address the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection (as well as the other objections raised against his initial FA-analysis), while preserving the same taxonomy of value relations (Rabinowicz 2012: 154). Consider the formulation of the objection in terms of value judgements. Rabinowicz's reasoning is the following. If preferences are conceived of as relations between monadic attitudes, then the agent does not engage in a *direct* value comparison. Indeed, preferences are no longer conceived of as dyadic, hence directly comparative, attitudes. Consequently, preferring an item to another does not involve judging that the former is better than the latter. This provides a clear solution to the 'consistency problem', for it implies that an agent can consistently prefer an item to another and judge that the former is not better than the latter. In addition, Rabinowicz's new account seems to provide a solution also to the 'substantive problem'. Indeed, if preferences do not involve value comparisons, saying that it is permissible to prefer one item to another does not imply saying that it is permissible to judge that the former is better than the latter. In other words, Rabinowicz's new account of parity does not sanction as permissible an incorrect value judgement.[17]

Nevertheless, Rabinowicz's solution is vulnerable to at least two objections. Suppose that the attitude of favouring an item *x* to degree *n* involves the judgement that *x* is good to degree *n*. Likewise, suppose that the attitude of favouring another item *y* to degree *m* involves the judgement that *y* is good to degree *m*. For reasons of psychological realism, degrees must here be interpreted non-numerically.[18] Having said that, let us assume that there is an appropriate, non-numerical sense in which $n > m$. We can thereby say that *x* is favoured to a higher degree than *y*. By definition of preference, this is equivalent to saying that *x* is preferred to *y*. But the judgement that *x* is favoured to a higher degree than *y* implies the judgement that *x* is good to a higher degree than *y*, or, more simply, that *x* is better than *y*. By transitivity, it follows that the preference for *x* over *y* implies the judgement that *x* is better than *y*. The 'consistency problem' reappears: the agent cannot consistently prefer *x* to *y* and judge that *x* is not better than *y*. The only difference with respect to the initial objection is that, since preferences are not dyadic mental states, they are not *constituted* by a betterness judgement. Rather, they *imply* it. For similar reasons, Rabinowicz's third solution fails to address the 'substantive problem'.

[16] This is possible since degrees of favourings are not assumed to be numbers.

[17] The same reply applies to the interpretation of preferences as involving a comparative judgement of the strength of supporting reasons.

[18] Thanks to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

Indeed, if the preference for *x* over *y* implies the judgement that *x* is better than *y*, then saying that it is permissible to prefer *x* to *y* implies saying that it is permissible to judge *x* to be better than *y*. Rabinowicz's modified analysis implies once again that it is permissible to have an incorrect value judgement.

The argument against Rabinowicz's third solution to the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection may take an even more direct form.[19] A key element of Rabinowicz's modified account is the claim that each favouring attitude admits of degrees. However, the notion of degree seems to be inherently comparative. Indeed, we know from measurement theory that degrees are always relative to two points, which fix the origin and the unit of the scale of measurement. Thus, saying that an item is favoured to an intermediate degree *n* is equivalent to saying that such an item is favoured more than one item (i.e. the item fixing the origin of the scale of measurement), but less than another (i.e. the item fixing the unit of the scale of measurement), in a way that preserves certain relational properties between these items. These features seem to remain in place, *mutatis mutandis*, also when degrees are understood *non*-numerically. The implication is the following: If we assume that the attitude of favouring involves a value judgement, then we should admit that the attitude of favouring an item *x to degree n* involves a *comparative* value judgement, namely, the judgement that *x* stands in a specific betterness relation with some other items, i.e. it occupies a specific position in the (non-numerical) betterness scale, relative to the most and the least favoured items. From this, it follows that the judgement that *x* is favoured to a higher degree than *y* involves the judgement that *x* occupies a higher relative position than *y* in the (non-numerical) betterness scale and, as such, that *x* is better than *y*. If this is the case, however, the connection between favourings and comparative value judgements appears to be as direct as the connection between preferences and comparative value judgements in Rabinowicz's initial account.

4. SOLVING THE PREFERENCES VS. VALUE JUDGEMENTS OBJECTION

In this section, I shall propose an alternative solution to the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection. The starting point is the observation that both the 'consistency problem' and the 'substantive problem' could be solved if it were somehow possible to 'relativize' Rabinowicz's definition of parity. Suppose, for instance, that instead of saying that two items *x* and *y* are on a par if and only if it is permissible *simpliciter* to strictly prefer one item to another and permissible *simpliciter* to have the opposite strict preference between them, we could say that two items *x* and *y* are on a par if and

[19] Thanks to Andrew Reisner for drawing my attention to this line of thought.

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only if it is permissible to strictly prefer x to y, *relative to an admissible vector of weights*, and permissible to strictly prefer y and x, *relative to a different admissible vector of weights*. This account would not generate either the 'consistency problem' or the 'substantive problem' associated with the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection. Indeed, if preferences involve value judgements, this account would imply that, when two items x and y are on a par, it is permissible to judge x to be better than y, *relative to an admissible vector of weights*, and permissible to judge y to be better than x, *relative to another admissible vector of weights*. There is no inconsistency here. In fact, it is perfectly possible for one to make relativized judgements of betterness of this kind, while denying that one of the two items is better than the other *simpliciter*. Likewise, saying that it is relatively permissible, i.e. relative to an admissible vector of weights, to judge one item to be better than the other does not imply saying that such a judgement is permissible *simpliciter*.

The problem with this solution, however, is that, at first sight, such a 'relativized' account of parity seems to collapse back into Rabinowicz's account. The reason is that the claim that a preference relation is permissible relative to an *admissible* vector of weights appears to entail the claim that such a preference relation is permissible *simpliciter*. After all, if a vector of weights is 'admissible' sans qualification, then it seems to generate preference relations that are also 'admissible' sans qualification, that is, permissible *simpliciter*. This seems actually the reason why Rabinowicz describes the set K of preference orderings generated by the admissible vectors of weights as the set of preference orderings that are permissible *simpliciter*. If this is the case, then the 'relativizing' strategy cannot solve either the consistency or the substantive problems associated with the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection.

However, in what follows I will show that one version of this 'relativizing' strategy can be successfully defended. More specifically, I will show that, contrary to the initial appearances, each admissible vector of weights does not determine a preference ordering that is permissible *simpliciter*, but only a preference ordering that is *relatively* permissible, that is, permissible only relative to one of the admissible vectors of weights. In order to do that, I will introduce some distinctions that will lead us to further expand the taxonomy of value relations proposed by Rabinowicz. In particular, I will argue that, for any value relation V, there exists an important distinction between a *strict* V, a *quasi-strict* V, a *rough* V and a *weak* V, which must be taken into account in developing an account of value relations. I shall then explain how these features of the account allow us to address the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection, in both of the versions distinguished above.

Let us begin by letting W be the set of admissible vectors of weights. As we have seen, each vector in W determines, in combination with the dimensions that are relevant for comparison, a preference ordering. More precisely, if we take the dimensions relevant for comparison as 'reasons' in favour of the compared items, then we can say that each vector in *W* generates a specific balance of reasons, which, in turn, determines a preference ordering. The interesting question is: In what sense exactly does the balance of reasons '*determine*' each preference ordering? One intuitive possibility consists in saying that all the preference relations that form a given preference ordering are *required* by the balance of reasons. However, it seems plausible to think that not all preference relations might be recommended by the balance of reasons in this way. In fact, in some cases, the balance of reasons may be such as to make some preference relations *merely permissible*. This raises a further question: How can we characterize the notions of 'requiredness' and 'mere permissibility' so as to allow for this possibility?

One suggestion is the following. Suppose that a given vector in *W* generates a balance of reasons such that the reasons in favour of one item *x* are stronger than the reasons in favour of another item *y* and such that the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting the two items lies *above* a specified threshold *t*. In this case, it seems that one is *required* to strictly prefer *x* to *y*, since the balance of reasons *decisively* favours *x* over *y*. On the other hand, suppose that a given vector in *W* generates a balance of reasons such that the reasons in favour of one item *x* are as strong as the reasons in favour of another item *y*, so that the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting the two items is equal to zero. In this case, it seems that one is *required* to be indifferent between *x* and *y*, since the balance of reasons is equally favourable to each of them and, thus, *decisively* recommends indifference.

The interesting situation is the one in which the balance of reasons does not decisively favour either a strict preference relation or an indifference relation. Suppose, for instance, that a given vector in *W* generates a balance of reasons such that the reasons in favour of one item *x* are stronger than the reasons in favour of another item *y*, but also such that the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting the two items lies *below* the specified threshold *t*. In other words, suppose that the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting the two items varies in the open interval (0, *t*). What should we say of such a situation?

Since the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting the two items is inferior to the required threshold, the balance of reasons does not decisively favour *x* over *y*. Nevertheless, since the reasons in favour of *x* are stronger than the reasons in favour of *y*, there is still *sufficient* reason to strictly prefer *x* to *y*. However, this does not mean that there is not *also* sufficient reason to have a different preferential attitude. In fact, since the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting the two items is quite small, it seems that there is also *sufficient* reason to be indifferent between x and y, for the two are *roughly equal*. In other words, when the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting two items x and y varies in the open interval $(0, t)$, there is sufficient reason *both* to strictly prefer x to y *and* to be indifferent between them.[20,21]

I believe that a similar distinction between decisive and sufficient reason can be drawn with respect to the preferential gap relation. Suppose, for instance, that the conflict of reasons in favour of two different items x and y cannot be resolved because two (or more) dimensions relevant for comparisons cannot be balanced against each other. Suppose that, were it not for those dimensions, the conflict of reasons could be resolved in one way or another (i.e. either by favouring one item over the other or by favouring them equally). Finally, suppose that, relative to a given

[20] The question of where to fix the threshold t is a substantive one. The only conceptual constraint is that $t > 0$. Notice, however, that if we fix $t = \varepsilon$, for an arbitrarily small $\varepsilon > 0$, then, whenever the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting two items x and y is greater than zero, there is always decisive reason to prefer x to y. In other words, for such a value of t, there are no circumstances in which there is sufficient reason both to strictly prefer x to y and to be indifferent between them.

[21] In fact, things are a little bit more complicated. Consider the following three scenarios. In (a), both x and y are worthwhile options, e.g. the overall strength of reasons in favour of each option lies above an absolute threshold g. In (b), only x is a worthwhile option, but not y, e.g. the overall strength of reasons in favour of x lies above an absolute threshold g, whereas the overall strength of reasons in favour of y lies below such a threshold. Finally, in (c), neither x nor y is a worthwhile option, e.g. the overall strength of reasons in favour of both x and y lies below an absolute threshold g. These cases can be characterized as follows. Case (a): Since both options are worthwhile and since the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting the two items is small, there is sufficient reason *both* to strictly prefer x to y *and* to be indifferent between x and y. Case (b): Since only x is a worthwhile option, then, despite the fact that the difference in the overall strength of reasons supporting the two items is small, there is decisive reason to strictly prefer x to y. Case (c): This case is symmetrical to (a). For simplicity, however, I will ignore these complications in what follows. The account proposed here is strongly inspired by Jonathan Dancy's account of enticing reasons. Dancy writes: 'Sometimes the notion of overall reason is combined with that of a sufficient reason. It is common to say that where the reasons come down on one side rather than the other, those reasons are sufficient and the reasons on the other side are insufficient. But this is to abuse the notion of the sufficient. That notion goes best with enticing reasons … . Sufficient enticing reason is something that can be shared by more than one option. An enticing reason (or a set of enticing reasons) is sufficient if it makes its option worth doing. There may be more than one thing that is worth doing, as things stand. An action that is worth doing, in this sense, is one that is above a certain absolute threshold; it is not a comparative matter, though there are always comparative questions about whether one action is more worthwhile than another' (Dancy 2004: 95). The only difference between my account and Dancy's is that, according to the latter, if two items x and y are both worthwhile and if the reasons supporting x are only slightly stronger than the reasons supporting y, then there is not just sufficient reason to strictly prefer x to y and sufficient reason to be indifferent between the two, but *also* sufficient reason to strictly prefer y to x. I have implicitly rejected this suggestion here.

admissible vector of weights, the above-mentioned dimensions are not especially important, i.e. the weights assigned to them are particularly small. In this case, it seems that one is *not* required to have a preferential gap between x and y. Rather, it is *merely permissible* for one to have a preferential gap between them, relative to that vector of weights. This means, however, that it is *also* merely permissible for one to adopt a different preference relation. In particular, it is merely permissible for one to adopt the preference relation favoured by the balance of reasons generated by the vector of weights under consideration and by the *other* relevant dimensions. Stretching the language a bit, we can say that, if some unimportant dimensions relevant for comparing x and y cannot be balanced against each other, then there is sufficient, but not decisive, reason to have a preferential gap between x and y, relative to a given vector of weights. Let us contrast this case with the following. Suppose that the conflict of reasons supporting two items x and y cannot be resolved because either all or the most important dimensions relevant for comparison cannot be balanced against each other. In this case (and only in this case), one is indeed *required* to have a preferential gap between x and y. In other words, if all or the most important dimensions relevant for comparing x and y cannot be balanced against each other, then there is decisive reason to have a preferential gap between x and y, relative to a given vector of weights.

In light of these considerations, we can characterize the notions of 'requiredness' and 'mere permissibility' more precisely. We can say that, for any two items x and y, a preference relation (i.e. strict preference or indifference or preferential gap) between x and y in a given preference ordering is *required* if and only if there is *decisive* reason in favour of that relation, relative to an admissible vector of weights. Moreover, we can say that a preference relation (i.e. strict preference or indifference or preferential gap) between x and y in a given preference ordering is *merely permissible* if and only if there is *sufficient* reason in favour of that relation, but *also* sufficient reason in favour of an alternative preference relation, relative to an admissible vector of weights.

This is, of course, only a characterization of 'requiredness' and 'mere permissibility' relative to a given vector of weights. Clearly, however, some preference relations may be required or merely permissible relative to *all* the admissible vectors of weights. How can we characterize the notion of requiredness and mere permissibility in such cases? Things seem straightforward for the former notion. If we focus, for simplicity, just on the strict preference relation, we can say that a strict preference relation between x and y is required, relative to all the admissible vectors of weights, if and only if there is decisive reason to strictly prefer x to y in *every* ordering generated by the vectors in W. By extension, we can offer a similar characterization of mere permissibility. We can say that a strict preference relation between x and y is merely permissible, relative to *all* the admissible vectors of weights, if and only if there is sufficient reason to strictly prefer x to y, but also sufficient reason in favour of an alternative preference relation (i.e. either indifference or preferential gap), in *every* ordering generated by the vectors in W.[22]

The next step consists in noticing that if (and only if) a preference relation is required relative to all the admissible vectors of weights, then it is required *simpliciter*. Likewise, if (and only if) a preference relation is merely permissible relative to all the admissible vectors of weights, then it is merely permissible *simpliciter*. Moreover, if we distinguish between 'mere permissibility' and 'permissibility' (sans qualification) – where the latter is conceived of as the disjunction of 'requiredness' and 'mere permissibility' – then we can say that a preference relation is 'permissible *simpliciter*' if and only if it is either required or merely permissible, relative to all the admissible vectors of weights, that is, if it is either required or merely permissible in each of the preference orderings generated by the vectors in W.

These results have some important implications for the present discussion. First, they lead us to a different interpretation of Rabinowicz's framework. Indeed, according to Rabinowicz, a strict preference for x over y is permissible *simpliciter* if and only if it is permissible (i.e. it is either required or merely permissible) to strictly prefer x to y in *some* preference ordering generated by the vectors in W. By contrast, according to the current proposal, a strict preference for x over y is permissible *simpliciter* if and only if it is permissible (i.e. it is either required or merely permissible) to strictly prefer x to y in *every* preference ordering generated by the vectors in W.

This is the source of another important difference. According to the current proposal, the set of preference orderings that are permissible *simpliciter* is the set of preference orderings formed by preference relations that are permissible relative to *all* the vectors in W. Let us call this the set P. Crucially, P may not coincide with the set of preference orderings K, which includes all the preference orderings formed by preference relations that are permissible relative to at least *one* vector in W, but (typically) not relative to *all* vectors in W. In other words, contrary to what Rabinowicz maintains, the set K will (typically) *not* be the set of preference orderings that are permissible *simpliciter*, but only the set of preference orderings that are *relatively* permissible.[23]

[22] The definition of required and merely permissible indifference (preferential gap), relative to all the admissible vectors of weights, can be similarly derived, *mutatis mutandis*, from the characterization in terms of one admissible vector of weights.

[23] We can make sense of the current proposal as follows. We can think of the set W as the set of all the different perspectives that one can legitimately take while comparing

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Importantly, the previous considerations can also be used to draw more subtle distinctions between value relations. For instance, we can now distinguish between *strict* betterness (or, simply, betterness) (B), *rough* betterness (RB) and *weak* betterness (WB). These can be defined as follows:

(B) x is *strictly better* than y if and only if it is required *simpliciter* to strictly prefer x to y.
(RB) x is *roughly better* than y if and only if it is merely permissible *simpliciter* to strictly prefer x to y.
(WB) x is *weakly better* than y if and only if it is permissible *simpliciter* to strictly prefer x to y.[24]

It is worth noticing that weak betterness is equivalent to the disjunction of strict betterness, rough betterness, *and* another value relation, which can be labelled *quasi-strict* betterness (QB) and which can be defined as follows:

(QB) x is *quasi-strictly better* than y if and only if it is both required to strictly prefer x to y, relative to some admissible vectors of weights, and merely permissible to strictly prefer x to y, relative to the other admissible vectors of weights.

We can draw similar distinctions in the case of worseness, equality, and incomparability.[25] Furthermore, in light of the previous considerations

the items. Within each legitimate perspective, a preference relation between two items may be either required or merely permissible. If a preference relation between two items is either required or merely permissible within *all* the legitimate perspectives, then it is permissible *simpliciter* (and vice-versa). Accordingly, the set of preference orderings that are permissible *simpliciter* is the set P of preference orderings formed by preference relations that are either required or merely permissible within *all* the legitimate perspectives. By contrast, the set K is the set of preference orderings formed by preference relations that are either required or merely permissible within at least *one* of the legitimate perspectives that one can take while comparing the items.

24 'Weakly better' is normally used to denote the disjunction between strict betterness and strict equality, in the same way as 'weak preference' is normally used to denote the disjunction between strict preference and indifference. The notation used here is thus partly revisionary and breaks the linguistic symmetry between the betterness and the preference relations. This is not necessarily a huge cost, since the symmetry between value and preference relations was already lost in Rabinowicz's framework.

25 One implication of the current analysis is that rough equality is compatible with rough betterness. According to the proposed analysis, x is *roughly equal* to y if and only if it is merely permissible *simpliciter* to be indifferent between x and y. According to the present account, however, it may be *both* merely permissible *simpliciter* to be indifferent between x and y *and* merely permissible *simpliciter* to strictly prefer x to y, since there may be sufficient reason both to strictly prefer x to y and to be indifferent between the two in *all* preference orderings. Considering this, 'slight betterness' would have perhaps been a more appropriate label than 'rough betterness'. In fact, it is not uncommon, in ordinary talk, to say that one item is slightly better than another, yet roughly equal to it. However, in ordinary talk, slight betterness is also supposed to entail strict betterness. 'Rough

we can refine, and partly revise, our understanding of parity. Recall that according to Rabinowicz's informal account of parity, two items are on a par if and only if it is both permissible to strictly prefer one to the other and permissible to have the opposite strict preference. According to the current understanding, however, this account must be modified in two important ways. First, it must be kept in mind that 'permissibility' should be conceived of as the disjunction of 'requiredness' and 'mere permissibility'. Second, it must also be kept in mind that cases of parity are not cases where it is permissible *simpliciter* to have opposite strict preferences between two items. Rather, they are cases where it is only *relatively* permissible to have opposite strict preferences between these items, i.e. permissible relative to different admissible vectors of weights. In light of this, we can distinguish between *strict* parity (or, simply, parity) (P), *quasi-strict* parity (QP), *rough* parity (RP) and *weak* parity (WP).

> (P) x is *strictly on a par* with y if and only if it is both required to strictly prefer x to y, relative to an admissible vector of weights, and required to strictly prefer y to x, relative to a different admissible vector of weights.
> (QP) x is *quasi-strictly on a par* with y if and only if either (a) it is both required to strictly prefer x to y, relative to an admissible vector of weights, and merely permissible to strictly prefer y to x, relative to a different admissible vector of weights; or (b) it is both merely permissible to strictly prefer x to y, relative to an admissible vector of weights, and required to strictly prefer y to x, relative to a different admissible vector of weights.
> (RP) x is *roughly on a par* with y if and only if it is merely permissible to strictly prefer x to y, relative to an admissible vector of weights, and merely permissible to strictly prefer y to x, relative to a different admissible vector of weights.
> (WP) x is *weakly on a par* with y if and only if it is both permissible (i.e. either required or merely permissible) to strictly prefer x to y, relative to an admissible vector of weights, and permissible (i.e. either required or merely permissible) to strictly prefer y to x, relative to a different admissible vector of weights.

One important implication of this analysis is that there are even more possible configurations of parity than implied by Rabinowicz's analysis – especially considering that, relative to some admissible vectors of weights, it may also be permissible (i.e. either required or merely permissible) to adopt preferential attitudes other than strict preferences towards items that are on a par in the sense of (P), (QP), (RP) and (WP).

Another important implication concerns the issue of what value judgements preferences exactly involve. It is uncontroversial that, if

betterness' is thus a preferable label, since, in the same way as rough equality does not entail strict equality (e.g. 'they are roughly equal, but not exactly equal'), so does rough betterness not entail strict betterness.

preferences involve value judgements, then *strict preferences* involve *betterness* judgements. In this section, however, we have seen that there exist three main ways in which an item can be better than another: one item can be either strictly better, or quasi-strictly better, or roughly better than another. Thus, it seems that if strict preferences involve betterness judgements, they must involve judgements that are compatible with *all* these types of betterness. But the only such judgements are judgements of *weak betterness*. Indeed, weak betterness is conceived of as the disjunction of strict-betterness, quasi-strict betterness and rough betterness. Given this, we should conclude that strict preferences involve *weak* betterness judgements. Accordingly, strictly preferring one item to another involves judging that the former is either strictly better, or quasi-strictly better, or roughly better than the other.[26]

We now have all the elements in place to explain how the current proposal can address the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection. For simplicity, in what follows I will only work with the formulation of the objection in terms of value judgements. Recall the two problems generated by Rabinowicz's analysis of parity. The first is a 'consistency problem': How can an individual *consistently* judge that one item is better than the other (as it is permissible for her to do), while at the same time denying that this is the case (since she judges that the two items are on a par and, hence, that neither is better than the other)? The second is a more 'substantive problem': How can it be *permissible* for an individual to judge that one item is better than the other, if this is an *incorrect* judgement (given that, when two items are on a par, neither is better than the other)?

As we have seen, the analysis of parity suggested in this paper presents two main differences with respect to Rabinowicz's. First, parity is defined in terms of *relatively* permissible opposite strict preferences. Second, strict preferences are now conceived of as involving *weak* betterness judgements. Together, these features imply that, contrary to Rabinowicz's analysis, cases of parity are not cases where it is permissible *simpliciter* to have opposite *strict* betterness judgements between two items. Rather, they are cases where it is either required or merely permissible for an agent to have opposite *weak* betterness judgements between two items, *relative to different admissible vectors of weights*. The proposed account is thus a refined version of the 'relativized' analysis of parity sketched at the beginning of this section. Because of this, it does not generate any of the problems that affect Rabinowicz's analysis. On the one hand, it may be perfectly consistent for an agent to strictly prefer x to y and, thus, to judge that x is weakly better than y, *relative to one admissible vector of weights*, while, at the same time, denying that x is weakly better

[26] The same considerations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the relation between strict preferences and comparative reason judgements.

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than *y simpliciter*. On the other hand, saying that it is permissible (i.e. either required or merely permissible) to strictly prefer *x* to *y* and, thus, to judge that *x* is weakly better than *y*, *relative to one admissible vector of weights*, does not imply saying that it is permissible *simpliciter* to judge that *x* is weakly better than *y*. If this is the case, then the current proposal does not generate either the consistency or the substantive problems associated with the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection.[27]

In fact, the current proposal seems always to deliver the correct judgements. Suppose, for instance, that one is required to strictly prefer *x* to *y*, relative to all the admissible vectors of weights. If strict preferences involve weak betterness judgements, the current account implies that one is required *simpliciter* to judge *x* to be weakly better than *y*. This judgement is actually correct. Indeed, if one is required *simpliciter* to strictly prefer *x* to *y*, then *x* is strictly better than *y*. If so, it is correct to judge that *x* is weakly better than *y*, since weak betterness is a disjunction of value relations including strict betterness. Likewise, suppose that it is merely permissible to strictly prefer *x* to *y*, relative to all the admissible vectors of weights. If strict preferences involve weak betterness judgements, the current account implies that it is merely permissible *simpliciter* to judge *x* to be weakly better than *y*. Once again, this is a correct judgement. Indeed, if it is merely permissible *simpliciter* to strictly prefer *x* to *y*, then *x* is roughly better than *y*. If so, it is correct to judge that *x* is weakly better than *y*, since weak betterness is a disjunction of value relations including rough betterness.

Before concluding, it is worth pointing out that the current proposal forces us to partially modify also the *formal* analysis of value relations. Indeed, since preferences can be either required or merely permissible, within each preference ordering in *K*, then, in order to determine which value relation holds, it is not sufficient to see whether a preference relation occurs in every preference ordering in *K*. In fact, one has to look at the underlying reasons supporting the different items. Taking only betterness as an example, we can say that:

(B) *x* is *strictly better* than *y* if and only if the difference in the strength of reasons supporting *x* and *y* is greater than the threshold *t* in *every* ordering in *K*.

(QB) *x* is *quasi-strictly better* than *y* if and only if *some* orderings in *K* are such that the difference in the strength of reasons supporting *x* and *y* is greater than the threshold *t*, and *the other* orderings in *K* are such that either (a) the difference in the strength of reasons supporting *x* and *y* varies within the

[27] It is worth noticing that this solution is compatible with different conceptions of preferences. In particular, it is compatible with all the conceptions of preferences mentioned in this paper, i.e. as choice dispositions, as relations between monadic attitudes, and as involving value judgements.

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open interval (0, t), or (b) when some relatively unimportant dimensions relevant for comparing x and y cannot be weighed against each other, the difference in the strength of reasons generated by the other weighable dimensions is greater than 0.[28]

(RB) x is *roughly better* than y if and only if *every* ordering in K is such that either (a) the difference in the strength of reasons supporting x and y varies in the open interval (0, t), or (b) when some relatively unimportant dimensions relevant for comparing x and y cannot be weighed against each other, the difference in the strength of reasons generated by the other weighable dimensions is greater than 0.

(WB) x is *weakly better* than y if and only if either (B) or (QB) or (RB) holds.

The formal analysis of the other value relations can be similarly derived from the previous considerations.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I examined the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection against Rabinowicz's FA-account of parity. I considered three responses offered by Rabinowicz, but argued that none of them ultimately succeed. I then presented my own solution and showed that it can successfully address the Preferences vs. Value Judgements objection. This solution has led us to identifying an even broader taxonomy of value relations than the one proposed by Rabinowicz.

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[28] Notice that when the difference in the strength of reasons generated by the other weighable dimensions is greater than the threshold t, then, in addition to there being sufficient reason in favour of a preference gap between x and y, there is sufficient reason only to strictly prefer x to y. By contrast, when the difference in the strength of reasons generated by the other weighable dimensions varies within the interval (0, t), then, in addition to there being sufficient reason in favour of a preference gap between x and y, there is *both* sufficient reason to strictly prefer x to y *and* sufficient reason to be indifferent between x to y.

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