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A Theory of Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

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I defend the view that the value of every contribution to individual well-being is explained by affective experience, suitably defined. In Chapter 1, I set out a methodological approach centered on Rawlsian wide reflective equilibrium and offer considerations in favor of affective experience as a uniquely powerful explanation of contributions to well-being. The remaining three chapters employ affective experience as an explanation of the goodness of the goods proposed by three leading theories of well-being: hedonism, desired-based views, and objective list views. In Chapter 2, I offer arguments against attitudinal conceptions of pleasure and defend instead an affective conception of pleasure that provides a plausible way of unifying two major phenomenological conceptions of pleasure. In Chapter 3, I defend an affective conception of desire and offer arguments against motivational and cognitivist conceptions of desire. In Chapter 4, I provide an account of reasons for affective states and apply this account to several purportedly objective goods: love, friendship, virtue, and self-respect. The goodness of these goods for individuals, I argue, can be explained by appeal to affective experience in a way that does not depart from what is most important in subjective approaches to well-being. Having offered a deeper explanation of the goodness of the various goods proposed by these three leading theories of well-being, I conclude that my theory is preferable to them.
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Chapter 1

Well-Being and Subjectivity

1. Introduction

On one telling of the history of philosophical ethics, it comes just to this: a long search for an adequate account of the good life. But it has long been recognized that this phrase, the good life, is ambiguous. One might take it to pick out a life characterized by moral goodness, where this amounts to goodness all things considered, or something at least approaching that high standard. But one might take it instead to pick out a life characterized by goodness for the individual living that life, where this amounts to a high level of individual well-being. My concern is the good life in this latter sense.

Like other contemporary theorists of well-being, my topic is therefore the conditions under which a life goes well or poorly for the one living it. Well-being is the concept we deploy when we say that things are going well or poorly for some individual. On this construal, well-being consists in a suitable balance of benefits over harms to the one living it, without essential reference to benefits and harms of other kinds. Claims about well-being understood this way are often put in terms of an individual’s welfare, interests, or personal good. I take all of these locutions to pick out the same concept: intrinsic value for an individual. Reflection on the nature of intrinsic value simpliciter is ubiquitous in the history of philosophical ethics. But explicit philosophical theorizing on
the concept of intrinsic value for an individual is a relatively recent enterprise, one that presents a unique array of opportunities and challenges.

This dissertation is comprised of four chapters. This one (Chapter 1) offers an account of the nature of well-being: what it is for something to have intrinsic value for an individual. The next three chapters argue that this account explains the goodness of candidate goods proposed by three major theories of well-being: hedonism (Chapter 2), desire-based views (Chapter 3), and objective list views (Chapter 4). My core thesis is this: Every contribution to well-being has its value for its subject in virtue of affective experience, suitably defined. In what follows, I explain what this claim amounts to and make clear the considerations that have led me to accept it. First, however, it is necessary to briefly describe my approach, what makes it distinctive from other work on this topic, and how this matters.

1.1. Methodology

For the remainder of this dissertation, I assume that the dominant method in contemporary ethical theory, reflective equilibrium, is a reliable method of reaching justified conclusions. But we can distinguish two versions of their method, narrow and wide reflective equilibrium (Daniels 1979). Narrow reflective equilibrium involves matching particular normative judgments with principles that systematize those judgments, pruning dissonant judgments and revising principles as necessary to arrive at a stable equilibrium point consisting of commitments each of which cohere with one another. Wide reflective equilibrium adds additional kinds of inputs to this procedure, most famously in Rawls (1971)’s employment of a contract apparatus to generate
principles of justice. Rawls claims that his principles not only cohere with our judgments about justice, but would also be chosen by self-interested rational contractors under conditions maximally conducive to deliberating about justice. This contract apparatus provides an additional check on the selection of principles. As Daniels puts it, “the detour of deriving the principles from the contract adds justificatory force to them, justification not found simply in the… matching of principles to judgments” (Daniels 1979, 261).

My approach to the theory of well-being employs wide reflective equilibrium so understood by including a “detour” that plays a role equivalent to that of Rawls’ contract apparatus. While most contemporary theorizing about well-being already goes beyond narrow equilibrium, its methodology is generally not structurally analogous to that employed by Rawls in the way that mine is. Theorists of well-being discuss considerations that go beyond the fitting together of judgments and principles about what is intrinsically good for individuals by, for example, appealing to views about the nature of persons (e.g., the structure of our motivations and the character of our mental states). These kinds of considerations are what Rawls and Daniels would characterize as suitably independent background theories: views that bear on the acceptability of particular narrow equilibrium points while themselves being independently justifiable to some sufficient degree (Daniels 1979, 259). Inclusion of background theories like these goes some of the way toward realizing the methodology of wide reflective equilibrium, but not all of the way. In Rawls’ and Daniels’ use, sufficiently independent background theories bear on narrow equilibrium only indirectly. What they bear on directly is the acceptability of the contract apparatus, which in turn bears on the acceptability of narrow-equilibric judgments and principles.
But contemporary theories of well-being typically lack an obvious analogue of Rawls’ contract apparatus. Crisp (2006, 102-103) distinguishes between enumerative and explanatory theories of well-being. Enumerative theories state what things are intrinsically good for individuals. Explanatory theories state why those things are intrinsically good for individuals. One might have expected explanatory theories to play the role in theorizing about well-being that the contract apparatus plays in Rawls’ theorizing about justice. But this is largely not the case. Consider some of the leading explanatory theories of well-being. Explanatory (rather than merely enumerative) hedonism makes the following claiming: every positive contribution to an individual’s well-being contributes just in virtue of being a pleasure. Explanatory (rather than merely enumerative) desire-based views make the following claim: every positive contribution to an individual’s well-being contributes just in virtue of being the satisfaction of one or more of her actual or possible desires. Explanatory (rather than merely enumerative) objective list views make the following claim: every positive contribution to an individual’s well-being contributes just in virtue of being a member of a set of objective goods. Explanation is typically taken to end here, with there remaining little or nothing more to say about why we should think these the right kinds to which to make explanatory appeals (Fletcher 2013, 218; Lin 2017, 67-68).

This lack of explanatory depth in most theories of well-being is a serious deficiency. It prevents these theories from taking full advantage of the methodological

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1 Crisp describes his distinction as a distinction between two sorts of theories of well-being. But it is more appropriate to understand the distinction as instead distinguishing two sorts of claims that a theory of well-being can make. Indeed, a theory of well-being must make both sorts of claims if it is to aim at revealing all of the facts about well-being. If we understand a “theory” of well-being as a comprehensive view on the topic, Crisp’s distinction is better conceived this way. I owe this understanding of what philosophical theories involve to Baruch Brody.
resources of wide reflective equilibrium. These theories do not offer an independent check on their principles of the sort that Rawls’ theory of justice offers for its principles via the explanatory “detour” through the contract apparatus. A theory of well-being that did include an analogue to Rawls’ contract apparatus would to that extent be a better theory in virtue of independently checking its principles, providing them with greater justificatory weight than they would otherwise have.

Some philosophers have provided analyses of the concept of well-being that one might think suitable to play this role. Campbell (2016) describes four such analyses. The first is Darwall (2002, 8-9)’s rational care analysis, according to which “what it is for something to be good for someone is for it to be something that is rational (makes sense, is warranted or justified) to desire for him insofar as one cares about him.” While this analysis does seem to express an important truth about the concept of well-being, it is not suitable to provide an independent check analogous to Rawls’ contract apparatus. That is because it does not plausibly imply substantive verdicts about what things contribute to well-being or why those things contribute. It does not place more than very general constraints on theories of what things contribute to well-being and why. Whatever things turn out to be intrinsically good for individuals, and whatever the underlying explanation of this, it will thereby plausibly be rational to desire these goods on behalf of others insofar as we care about them. Darwall’s view therefore cannot provide an independent check on narrow-equilibric judgments and principles about well-being.

A second contender is (Campbell 2013, 334)’s appealing life analysis, according to which “what it is for something to be good for you is for that thing to contribute to the appeal or desirability of being in your position,” which Campbell (2016) re-terms the
positional analysis. Like Darwall’s analysis, this view plausibly expresses an important truth about the concept well-being. Also like Darwall’s analysis, however, this view does not imply substantive verdicts about well-being. It does not place anything more than very general constraints on narrow-equilibric judgments and principles about well-being. Whatever things turn out to be intrinsically good for individuals, and whatever the underlying explanation, those things will thereby plausibly contribute to the appeal or desirability of being in the position of someone who possesses them.

A third contender is the locative analysis, proposed by Moore ([1903] 1976) and developed further by Fletcher (2012). On Moore’s construal, this analysis says that to be good for an individual is to be either i) intrinsically good and possessed by them, or ii) such that the state of affairs consisting in their possessing it is intrinsically good. Fletcher further specifies the possession relation in terms of a good’s being “essentially related to” an individual in virtue of depending on her for its existence (Fletcher 2012, 3). He also adds the further requirement that a good, G, have “properties that generate, or would generate, agent-relative reasons for X to hold pro-attitudes towards G for its own sake” in order to be non-instrumentally good for X (Fletcher 2012, 3). While this view does imply some substantive verdicts relevant to narrow-equilibric judgments and principles,² it does not sufficiently narrow the field of such judgments and principles to provide an independent check on them. That is because it is compatible with any list of proposed goods that depend essentially on individuals for their existence. For any such list, one can claim that its members are intrinsically good and give those who possess them reasons in favor of pro-attitudes. Beyond its stipulation that we explain the goodness of

² In particular, it rules out various subjectivist explanatory theories of well-being. I discuss precisely how to formulate the distinction between subjectivist and objectivist explanatory theories in the next chapter.
contributions to well-being by reference to intrinsic or non-instrumental goodness *simpliciter*, this view therefore does not provide more than a very general check on narrow equilibrium.

Campbell (2016) calls the fourth analysis that he describes the *suitability analysis*. Campbell attributes this view to Kraut (2007).¹ The relevant passage in Kraut claims that “the ‘for’ in ‘G is good for S’ is best taken to indicate that G has a certain kind of suitability to S: their properties are so matched to each other that G serves S well” (Kraut 2007, 86-87). Understood this way, Kraut’s view does not place sufficient constraints on narrow-equilibric judgments and principles about well-being to serve as analogue of Rawls’ contract apparatus. But Kraut further specifies this analysis in terms of what he calls *developmentalism*: the view that well-being consists in flourishing, where “a flourishing human being is one who possesses, develops, and enjoys the exercise of cognitive, affective, sensory, and social powers (no less than physical powers)” (Kraut 2007, 137).

This plausibly makes Kraut’s view a version of explanatory (and not merely enumerative) *perfectionism*, the view that what is intrinsically good for individuals is so

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¹ Campbell credits Rosati (2009) with this interpretation of Kraut. Rosati (2006, 110)’s analysis of well-being also plausibly falls under the suitability analysis insofar as she uses the concepts of “fit” and “suitability” to capture the basic idea behind her proposal.

Rosati further specifies her analysis with the following list of features, analogous to those of healthy relationships of love: “tend[ing] to support their participants’ sense of their own value,” “tend[ing] to be enlivening rather than enervating,” “provid[ing] an important component of an individual’s identity and a sense of direction in life,” and “tend[ing] to be self-perpetuating (which is not to say eternal), sources of internal motivation” (Rosati 2006, 119-120). Her resulting analysis is this: “being good for a person is the second-order relational property of being productive of this set of features… ones exhibited in a healthy love relationship” (Rosati 2006, 122).

While I find Rosati’s version of the suitability analysis largely plausible, it too is unsuitable to serve as an analogue of Rawls’ contract apparatus because it is compatible with a fairly wide array of narrow-equilibric judgments and principles about well-being. I note, however, that the view I defend is compatible with Rosati’s version of the suitability analysis, save that I reject the requirement of importance to an individual’s identity and sense of direction in order to allow for modest and one-off contributions to an individual’s well-being. See my Chapter 4, Section 4.
in virtue of being a successful exercise of capacities constitutive of human nature. This view attempts to provide what explanatory objective list theories do not, and perhaps cannot: an additional, independent check on the principles specifying the objective goods. In my view, explanatory perfectionism ultimately does not succeed in this aim, but its attempt yields an important insight. Explanatory perfectionism offers an explanation of the right form: proposing a common underlying feature of various candidate goods. It offers a substantive conception of the nature of well-being, which it then attempts to appropriately connect with the nature of the various candidate goods. Explanatory perfectionism fails not because of the form of its explanation, but because of the content: it offers a substantive conception of the nature of well-being that turns out to be insufficient to explain the goodness of the candidate goods.

I draw this objection to explanatory perfectionism from Bradford (2016, 133), who puts the point this way:

Perfectionism offers us a theory of what the goods on the objective list have in common, but it does not explain why they are good. It explains why this or that good is on the list, but it does not explain why the list is a list of what’s good.

Bradford (2017, 354) further develops this worry into what she calls the Deep Problem for perfectionism. Of perfectionism’s claim that various goods figuring in objectivist list theories are good because they involve developing capacities constitutive of human nature, she writes:

[T]his is not an explanation of why the things on the list are good. We already have strong intuitive support that objective list items are good. The task of perfectionism is to explain their goodness. But it’s not clear just how it does the explanatory work; it unifies, but how does it explain goodness? It is a descriptive account of what is common among the things on the list. Perfectionism can identify additional items to add to the list
and help us identify imposters. But it is not clear how it explains why developing the capacities would be \textit{good} (Bradford 2017, 354).

Bradford offers several potential responses on behalf of perfectionism, but finds none of them completely satisfactory. Importantly, however, she closes her discussion with one final strategy for perfectionism. This is the \textit{tu quoque} response, which points out that all other theories of well-being likewise face this problem, and none has yet succeeded in solving it (Bradford 2017, 362). So explanatory perfectionism is (at least in its current formulations) unsuitable to serve as an analogue of Rawls’ contract apparatus because it does not deeply explain, and so justify claims about, the goodness of various purportedly objective goods. But neither has any other theory of well-being provided a solution to the Deep Problem.

The remainder of this dissertation consists in my own solution. The view I develop and defend is structurally analogous to explanatory perfectionism. It proposes a common feature of various candidate goods that suggests a distinctive, substantive conception of the nature of well-being. This common feature is \textit{affective experience}, suitably defined. This conception provides an independent check on the selection of principles specifying which things are good for individuals, because the view is supported by arguments sufficiently independent of the balancing of particular judgments and principles characteristic of narrow equilibrium. The task of the remainder of this chapter is to clarify the relevant notion of affective experience and offer these independent arguments. The task of the chapters that follow is to show how this view of the nature of well-being explains the goodness of candidate goods proposed by hedonism (Chapter 2), desire-based views (Chapter 3), and objective list theories (Chapter 4).
2. Four Considerations in Favor of Subjectivity

I now offer four considerations in favor of the claim that the nature of well-being is best understood in terms of some feature of our subjectivity, or conscious mental life. These considerations suggest that the nature of well-being can be plausibly accounted for in terms of a distinctive form of subjective valuation. I then argue that the best way to further specify valuation is in terms of affective experience. Affective experience thereby emerges as the cornerstone of my conception of the nature of well-being, which I clarify and defend from some potential objections.

2.1. The Separateness of Persons

The first of these considerations is the widely endorsed thesis of the separateness of persons. The relevant separateness consists in “the fact that each of us has a separate capacity for consciousness, and a special reason for promoting the enjoyment and minimizing the suffering arising through that capacity’s being exercised” (Crisp 2006, 141). The doctrine of the separateness of persons has two components: first, what is called the metaphysical separateness of persons, and second, what is called the normative separateness of persons (Brink 1993, 254). The claim of metaphysical separateness says that it is our status as conscious beings that makes us distinct individuals. In particular, it is the fact that our conscious mental states are private, possessed by each of us alone and no one else. The metaphysical separateness of persons explains why each of us has our own life, in a sense of life distinct from purely biological categories. Conjoined twins who share vital organs thereby share life in a biological way, yet are distinct individuals with their own distinct lives in the way that concerns us here. It is their having distinct
minds, and thereby distinct mental lives, that explains why they have distinct lives of the kind to which well-being can accrue. This suggests the need to distinguish between three senses of “life,” and that there is an important connection between life as specified in (2) and (3):

1) Biological life
2) Mental life
3) Life in the sense in which a life can go better or worse for its subject

In order to see the shape this connection between (2) and (3) might take, we need to introduce a second idea: the normative separateness of persons.

The claim of normative separateness is that, as a consequence of our metaphysical separateness, we each stand in a unique relation to our own well-being where our reasons are concerned. I stand in this relation to my own well-being but not to yours, and you stand in it to yours but not to mine. Typically, the relation is taken to involve in the permissibility of partiality, of paying special attention to our own good. But this is a substantive conception of the normative separateness of persons, one that need not be taken on board to recognize the more general lesson of normative separateness: that the manner in which my reasons to promote my own good are given, explained, or grounded is a special one, somehow distinct from the way in which my reasons to promote the good of others is given, explained, or grounded. Even if it turns out that I ultimately should not give my own good greater weight than that of others, the source of my self-regarding reasons in a special kind of source.

If it is true that normative separateness is in fact implied by metaphysical separateness, then the same thing that explains metaphysical separateness must figure in
the explanation of normative separateness. And that means that our status as conscious beings, beings possessed of subjectivity, figures in the explanation of our special relation to our own good. It may turn out, of course, that subjectivity of a certain kind is only necessary, but not sufficient, for having a personal good. But the most straightforward account of these matters is that what explains the fact that we are distinct individuals also explains why we have distinct personal goods, without the need to appeal to anything further. This option becomes more plausible once we consider how subjectivity might explain the relational nature of well-being, that fact that well-being consists in value for a particular individual.

2.2. The Relational Nature of Well-Being

Sumner (1992, 4) offers a canonical description of the concept of well-being: “Common sense tells us that a person’s welfare, or well-being, is a matter of how well she is doing, or how well her life is going, or how well-off she is.” Well-being so understood involves what strikes many as a distinctive form of value. Well-being is always the well-being of a specific individual, accruing or belonging to her life in particular. Sumner puts the point this way:

Welfare assessments concern what we may call the prudential value of a life, namely how well it is going for the individual whose life it is. This relativization of prudential value to the proprietor of the life which it modifies is one of the deepest features of the language of welfare: however valuable something may be in itself, it can promote someone’s well-being only if it is also good or beneficial for her (Sumner 1992, 4, fn. omitted).\(^4\)

\(^4\) In the omitted footnote, Sumner credits Griffin (1986) with introducing the locution “prudential value of a life.” See Sumner (1992, 4, fn. 3).
It is a curious feature of well-being that it is relational in this way, consisting in value for the individual to whose life it accrues. A philosophical theory of well-being must explain its relational nature, for this is perhaps its most distinctive feature.

Sumner explains the relational nature of well-being by appealing to what he calls “the subjectivity of well-being”:

The kind of subjectivity I have in mind here is the dependence of the prudential value of a life on the feelings, or aims, or preferences—what I shall generally call the attitudes or concerns—of the person whose life it is. Welfare is subjective because the prudential value of a life is the value it has for its subject, and the subject’s hierarchy of attitudes or concerns defines her evaluative point of view (Sumner 1992, 5, fn. omitted).

In Sumner’s usage, “subjectivity” names a property of well-being. What this comes to is the property of depending upon “subjectivity” in a second sense, one that aligns with the way I used the term earlier: that feature of individuals in virtue of which they, the individual, are a subject. This feature is that of having a conscious mind, composed of mental states—mental states of which they are the subject, the one who can be said to have or be in the states. Sumner’s thesis of the subjectivity of well-being therefore consists in the claim that well-being depends upon some feature of subjectivity qua having a conscious mind, and in particular, those aspects of subjectivity that make up an individual’s “evaluative point of view.”

This is a natural and plausible way of making sense of the relational nature of well-being: on this construal, what makes value for someone is its being appropriately connected with her own evaluative outlook, suitably defined. Sumner’s way of accounting for the relational nature of well-being in terms of subjectivity is therefore

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5 Sumner (1996, 43) also draws this connection between the two senses of subjectivity.
6 Henceforth, I will use this word “subjectivity” only in this latter sense. When referring to Sumner’s other usage of this term, I will substitute “subjective,” “subjectivist view,” and “subjectivism.”
another consideration in favor of subjectivity as a candidate explanation of the nature of well-being. This dovetails with a related idea: that contributions to well-being must resonate with their subjects.

2.3. Resonance

Railton (1986a, 9) proposes what has come to be known as a resonance constraint on theories of well-being:

[W]hat is intrinsically valuable for a person must have a connection with what he would find in some degree compelling or attractive, at least if he were rational and aware. It would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone’s good to imagine that it might fail in any such way to engage him.

Railton claims that only those things that “compel,” “attract,” or “engage” an individual, or those things suitably connected to what does, can contribute to her well-being. Railton’s constraint is often invoked in support of a connection between well-being and motivation, where motivation is understood in terms of a disposition to pursue or promote.

But the resonance condition is implausible when understood this way. Consider Quinn (1993, 32)’s Radio Man, who has a behavioral compulsion to joylessly turn on all radios nearby. Radio Man is motivated in the sense of being to disposed to pursue the turning on of radios, but he seems not the least bit compelled, attracted to, or engaged by this activity. Nor is it at all plausible that this activity benefits Radio Man. This suggests that resonance is not best understood in terms of dispositions to behavior, but instead in some other way.⁷

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Rosati (1996, 297) interprets Railton’s constraint as expressing *existence internalism* about reasons, or “the general thesis that there is a necessary connection between motivation and normative status.” As Rosati recognizes, this renders the constraint implausible if we understand being motivated by something as merely being behaviorally “moved to seek it” (Rosati 1996, 300). Rosati therefore understands motivation in a broader way:

[A] long as we can care about or like or be glad of something once we acquire or experience it, this seems enough to satisfy the intuition behind internalism… In this sense, to motivate is to prompt or elicit a proattitude—such as desiring, liking, being glad of, caring about, and so on—an attitude which may or may not be a motive to action. To say that something must motivate, in the broad sense, to be part of a person’s good, is to say that it must be something that can, in a positive way, matter to her or be an object of her concern” (Rosati 1996, 301).

She also cites Velleman (1998) as understanding motivation in a similar way, one invoking *affect*. Rosati does not endorse this connection between motivation and affective because she maintains that it involves unnecessary “connotations of emotion or feeling” and says that it “suggests a passive state” (Rosati 1996, 301, fn. 11). But we need not understand affect in a way that invites these worries. In what follows, I propose instead a conception of affect on which it is a common experiential element of such various states as pleasure, desire, and love. This allows me to take on board Rosati’s understanding of resonance as implying motivation in the broad sense of mattering to someone “in a positive way” (Rosati 1996, 301) while also providing a deeper account of why attitudes like desire *count* as involving resonance.

An alternative way of taking Railton’s talk of finding “compelling or attractive” and being “engage[d]” is therefore in terms of *experiences* of a certain kind. The

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8 I further discuss why this understanding is implausible in Chapter 3.
phenomenologist Scheler describes something like this kind of experience when he writes:

> [V]alues as values, goods as goods, and not merely things, are **experientially efficacious or motivating**. They “attract” and “repel.” This does not mean, as it could easily be interpreted, that we desire or detest them only in terms of drives… [there is an] **experienced attraction and repulsion** that come from goods *themselves* (Scheler 1973, 247, his italics, my bolding).

On this understanding of resonance, it involves a distinctively **experiential** form of attraction. Resonance understood in terms of experience might consist either in finding attractive an experience itself, or in finding an intentional object attractive via an experience. Or perhaps (as I will later argue) we should understand both of these as involving resonance. It is true that we often take motivation in this experienced-attraction sense to be related to motivation in a behavioral sense. But this, I take it, is because we understand our motivation in the behavioral sense to be explained by motivation in the experienced-attraction sense. When we speak of something as being attractive, appealing, or engaging, we say something that is about its behavior-motivating effect on us *through* our experience of it. What certain experiences are like for us explains our motivation in the behavioral sense.

The distinction between experienced attraction and merely behavioral motivation can be brought out by attending to Heathwood (2016, 142-43)’s distinction between “merely behavioral” and “true appeal” conceptions of *desire*. To desire *that p* in the merely behavioral sense amounts simply to a disposition to attempt to bring *p* about. By contrast, desire in the true appeal sense, or “ordinary desire,” involves a particular kind of experience:

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9 Chappell (2016, comment 1) suggests in a recent discussion on the philosophical ethics blog *PEA Soup* that we should think of resonance as a phenomenal property.
If a person has an ordinary desire for some event to occur (or to have occurred or to be occurring), the person finds the occurrence of the event attractive or appealing, is enthusiastic about it (at least to some extent), and tends to view it with pleasure or gusto (Heathwood 2019, 674).

To desire that $p$ in the merely behavioral sense while failing to desire it in the ordinary sense would amount to a mere compulsion: one would in this case not find $p$ compelling, attractive, or engaging in the sense that makes Railton’s condition plausible, but instead be like Quinn’s Radio Man (Heathwood, 2019, 678). Despite desiring that $p$ in some sense, one would find oneself alienated: the prospect of $p$ would be utterly unenlivening.

The more plausible construal of resonance, therefore, construes it in terms of subjective experience. Resonance is the experienced feeling of attraction or appeal described above. If we lacked subjectivity, we would lack the capacity for any such feeling. So too would we then lack a personal good that resonated with us. Having now described how subjectivity plausibly figures in resonance, I describe how this can in turn explain the idea of individuals possessing evaluative authority over the content of their own well-being.

2.4. Evaluative Authority

Subjectivity in my sense is crucially implicated in what Dorsey (2017, 196) calls “evaluative authority: authority to determine the good,” where determining is here understood as making it the case that something is good. Though the claim that an individual has authority to determine her own good is less ambitious than the claim that she can determine the good, it is controversial nonetheless. According to Dorsey, the

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10 The plausibility of understanding resonance in this way, of course, depends on the theoretical work it can do, especially whether it generates more plausible narrow-equilibrice judgments than other ways of understanding resonance. The remainder of this dissertation can therefore be understood as making good on my claim.
claim of evaluative authority marks the distinction between subjectivist and objectivist views of well-being, with subjectivists affirming it and objectivists denying it. But there is much to be said in favor of the existence of evaluative authority in the case of well-being. It is the best explanation of the relevance of personal taste to an individual’s well-being (Sobel 2005), as well as of the related but more general claim that what is good for someone must “fit” or “suit” her as an individual (Rosati 2006, 109-110). And Mill seems to endorse a version of the thesis of evaluative authority in On Liberty when he claims that “[i]f a person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode” (Mill [1859] 1982, 64).

A natural way to make sense of evaluative authority is with reference to subjectivity. Something’s resonating with us in the distinctively experiential way described above can be understood as the employment or expression of our evaluative authority, via what we earlier saw Sumner (1992, 5) calling an individual’s “evaluative point of view.” Evaluative points of view fall under the more general category of standpoints, in the following sense:

In its most basic distillation, a standpoint takes as inputs certain facts, e.g., about a given action, assigns a particular importance (or “strength”) to these facts, and generates an evaluative output: an assignment of “good”, “bad”, “required”, “permissible”, etc., to the action in question (Dorsey 2016, 9). Dorsey apparently conceives of standpoints as abstract sets of standards, listing morality, prudence, and the norms of friendship as examples, with a sharp distinction between the standards themselves and the facts to which they are applied. Against this backdrop, an

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11 In the next chapter, I discuss just how to formulate this distinction.
12 See also Urmson (1950) on the related notion of grading.
individual’s evaluative point of view seems to be a special kind of standpoint: a *concrete* one instantiated in the world, rather than merely *applied* to the world. An evaluative point of view does not merely assign importance to facts, but consists in *the fact of an individual’s doing this* via her own mental states.

This seems to what Hume describes in *A Treatise of Human Nature* when he speaks of a form of evaluation “more properly felt than judg’d of” (Hume [1739/1740] 2009, 470). This distinguishes it from evaluative *belief* and *judgment*, which aim to track independent evaluative facts. In order to mark this distinction, I will from now on refer to the kind of evaluation that I have in mind as “valuation.” The distinguishing feature of valuation in this sense is that it is not answerable to an independent evaluative order in the way that evaluative belief and judgment are. Instead, under the right conditions, certain states of subjectivity *make it the case that things matter*, in a sense of mattering that is properly analyzable in terms of *mattering to someone*, of being an object of her concern (Hare 1972, 33-35). *Valuation* produces a distinctive kind of *value*.

This is claim is a bold one. The task of the remainder of this chapter is clarify what exactly the claim involves, defend it from skeptical worries, and show its fitness to serve as the key theoretical ingredient in a conception of the nature of well-being.

### 3. From Valuation to Affect

We can better understand the idea of valuation in terms of what Mendola (1990) calls *felt phenomenal value*, which he claims is involved in experiences of pleasure and pain. Felt phenomenal value possesses a highly significant feature: it is only characterizable in

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13 I borrow this term from Wiggins (1976), who gives it a different sense than the one I have in mind, and Anderson (1993, 3-5), who gives it a similar sense to the one I employ.
irreducibly evaluative terms. But reflection on the nature of felt phenomenal value suggests that pleasure and pain are not its only instances. This yields the notion of affective experience, a broader category that includes, but is not exhausted by, the hedonic states that Mendola countenances.

3.1. From Valuation to Felt Phenomenal Value

Because well-being is a value concept, facts about well-being must be value-involving facts. That is, they must be facts of a different sort than those of, for example, physics, which are describable without appeal to evaluative terms (“good,” “bad,” and so on). Value-involving facts are notoriously difficult to explain, as perennial philosophical disputes over the existence and nature of moral facts illustrate.

But in the case of well-being, certain states of subjectivity provide a way in. Some states of subjectivity, I will now argue, are innately value-involving in a way that makes sense of how valuation produces value. I want to again sharply distinguish this from evaluative belief and judgment. The belief or judgment that p is valuable, for example, might be said to have evaluative content in the sense that their propositional content employs evaluative predicates. I am drawing attention to something quite different. Beliefs and judgments about value are, when true, recognitions of value. The structure of belief and judgment is such that they are answerable to facts, because the internal aim of such states is truth (Keller 2009, 667-68). But states that involve valuation in my sense,

14 I use this terminology rather than the linguistically simpler terms “value facts” or “evaluative facts” in order to make clear that these facts are not solely about value; they are a kind of fact consisting in both evaluative and non-evaluative elements.
such as pleasure and pain, lack this internal aim.\(^\text{15}\) What I am describing are mental states that are value-involving in a way that arises from their subjective character alone, rather than in virtue of having a propositional content employing an evaluative predicate in a truth-apt way.

Mendola (1990)’s view of the nature of pleasure and pain is the most straightforward example of valuation in this sense:

The phenomenal difference between those in bliss and agony seems to include a difference in a sort of felt phenomenal *value*. The *phenomenal* difference between pain and pleasure seems to be at least in part that the phenomenal component of the former is nastier, intrinsically *worse* than that of the second (Mendola 1990, 702).

Mendola claims that hedonic states are value-involving just in virtue of their phenomenology: what it is like for their subject to experience them. As Mendola puts it, “If one experiences something red then there is something red, if only a sense-datum… If someone feels bad, then there is *something* bad” (Mendola 1990, 702). Such states are “positively or negatively valenced” in virtue of their experienced phenomenal character (Mendola, 1990, 709). What it is like to be in these states is what *makes* them value-involving, in a way that need make reference to nothing beyond the nature of the states

\(^{15}\) Even if one thinks that pains have a special functional role—the representation of tissue damage to their subject’s body, for example (Tye 2015)—pain’s felt negative valence still demands a further, evaluative, theoretical treatment. The way that pain feels, regardless of the relation in which this feeling stands to some representational function, is value-laden in a way whose evaluative significance is not exhausted by this function. As Siewert (1998, 310) points out, evaluative questions about (phenomenal) consciousness cannot be answered merely in terms of facts about its functional role: “even if we suspend judgment on the *efficacy* of consciousness, after we have recognized its *reality*, we will find no excuse for refusing to recognize its *importance*.” See also Rawlette (2016), who distinguishes her own view of hedonic states from evaluative judgment in a similar way.
themselves. And that implies that these states are, in an important sense, *productive* of value.

It is natural to wonder now how it could be that subjectivity can *produce* value. We need a clearer specification of the mental capacity that underlies this power. Hume famously maintains that the mind has two quite different capacities, *reason* and *taste*:

The one discovers objects, as they really stand in nature, without addition or diminution: The other has a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises, in a manner, a new creation” (Hume [1751] 1998, 89).

Reason in Hume’s sense involves truth-apt attitudes, such as belief and judgment. These attitudes are answerable to facts, and so are when true *recognitions* of facts. To use Hume’s phraseology, such attitudes involve *discovery* of pre-existing facts. Taste, by contrast, *produces*. It bestows properties upon things, rather than attributing them to things in a way that involves *accuracy*. On Hume’s view, taste does this via sentiment (feeling). Crucially, the bestowed properties are real rather than illusory. They constitute “a new creation”—and creations, though produced, genuinely exist. Hume’s faculty of taste, characterized by its productive power with its basis in sentiment, picks out just the capacity that plausibly underlies Mendola’s phenomenon of *felt phenomenal value*. Hume, of course, speaks of “gilding or staining” what he terms “natural objects” rather than experiences themselves. And that suggests that the phenomenon that Mendola has identified in pleasure and pain may have an analogue in *intentional* mental states. I now show how one can sensibly get from the idea of felt phenomenal value to the broader

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16 Rawlette (2016) also holds this view. Helm (2002) holds a similar view. Because it introduces significantly more complexity to the picture that I am only describing in a basic way now, I put off discussion of Helm’s view for the moment.
category of affective experience, which figures not just in hedonic states but also in desire and other attitudes.

3.2. From Felt Phenomenal Value to Affect

To experience pleasure is to i) experience felt phenomenal value, ii) characteristically along with some other form of experience. Take the sensory pleasure involved in my experience of drinking this coffee. This experience has various non-valuational, sensory phenomenal properties: most obviously, the flavor notes, but also the tactile sensation involved in sipping it (rather than guzzling it) and how hot (rather than cold) it feels. These all contribute to the distinctive character of the experience, but the experience only counts as a pleasure because it also involves felt phenomenal value. The sensation feels good, rather than bad or neutral, in a way whose meaning is anchored by my experience of it. Similarly, the cognitive pleasure involved in thinking of my friend has various non-valuational, cognitive phenomenal properties (those representational properties that make it about my friend, whatever those come to). These make the thought of my friend an experience, but the experience only counts as a pleasure because it also involves felt phenomenal value. This too feels good, rather than bad or neutral, in a way that I can readily introspect, and only thereby understand.

But what, precisely, is felt phenomenal value? My answer: positive resonance. In the case of pleasure, it consists in some phenomenal features of an experience being themselves experienced as appealing or attractive. And to be experienced as appealing or attractive just is to be appealing or attractive for the experiencer. Something is appealing for you just in virtue of appealing to you, attractive for you just in virtue of you finding it
so. This is an intriguing feature of felt phenomenal value, because it implies that felt phenomenal value is always value for someone. This is a straightforward consequence of its being felt phenomenal value; felt phenomenology is always for its subject. Felt phenomenal value is for its subject in the same way that all experiences are for their subject, and for them alone (Frey 2013, 83; Siewert 2014).

Moreover, felt phenomenal value is genuine value. As Mendola points out, no one could understand pleasure or pain without reference to the ideas of feeling good and feeling bad. The project of describing hedonic experience demands “explicit committing mention of normative properties in any of its complete and adequate characterizations” (Mendola 1990, 712). These are irreducibly value-involving experiences; they admit of no intelligible explication in non-evaluative terms. We can formalize this idea as follows:

**Irreducible Goodness:** S’s mental state M grounds goodness for S only if M is irreducibly evaluative, such that the complete, accurate characterization of M includes evaluative predicates (“good,” “positive,” “attractive,” “appealing,” and so on).

This is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one. For one might think that other mental states like the ones I described earlier—evaluative belief, for example—fulfill this condition, yet being in these states does not plausibly ground goodness for anyone. Believing that it is good, or right, or virtuous to contribute large amounts of one’s income to charitable causes does not make so contributing good for you. Doing so might well be good for you under the right circumstances, but your belief is not what makes it so.

The belief that p is answerable to the truth about p, rather than the truth about p being answerable to the belief. This holds as strongly for evaluative belief in particular as it does for belief in general. In this way, the mental state of belief contrasts to the kind of mental state that I have in mind. Evaluative beliefs can only be completely, accurately
characterized in evaluative language because their *content* is evaluative. Such beliefs are *about* evaluative properties, so it is no surprise that they can only be adequately characterized in evaluative terms. The states that I have in mind are irreducibly evaluative *regardless of their particular content*. The *kind* of state that they are is itself only completely, accurately characterizable in evaluative terms. So my necessary and *sufficient* condition for a state’s grounding goodness for S is:

**Constitutive Irreducible Goodness:** S’s mental state M grounds goodness for S if and only if M is a token of mental state kind K, where K is irreducibly evaluative such that the complete, accurate characterization of any member of K includes positive evaluative predicates (“good,” “positive,” “attractive,” “appealing,” and so on).

This picks out a class mental states that *constitutively* involve a form of value (one that is intelligible only when “seen” from the inside of the state) just in virtue of the kind of state that they are. To the extent that evaluative beliefs involve a form of value, they do not do so constitutively: their being value-involving is explained by something beyond themselves, namely, the evaluative properties that they are beliefs about.

But notice now that hedonic states are not the only member of this kind. Desires, understood in Heathwood (2016)’s “true appeal” sense discussed earlier, are similarly uncharacterizable except in irreducibly evaluative terms. We can only understand what is like for an individual to have a desire of this sort with reference to its *object* presenting as “appealing” or “attractive” to her. And this mode of presentation is irreducibly positively valenced; to characterize it otherwise would leave out what is most essential. So now we have two distinct state-types, one non-intentional (hedonic states) and one intentional (desires), which nonetheless both fall under the overarching kind I described above. I
refer to the unifying kind of which these two state-types are members as affective experience.

Positive affective experience contrasts with merely behavioral forms of attraction that consist in mere pursuit of what attracts. In order to fully capture the idea of positive affective experience, I need to further specify the relevant form of attraction as basic experiential attraction. The contrast with belief is once again instructive. Basic experiential attraction is basic in the sense that it does not involve attributing favorable properties that presuppose some independent standard of favorability (e.g. the standards of morality, or of aesthetics). It instead involves the conferral of a response-dependent property: something’s being good by the lights of the subject in a sense fixed by her being attracted to it, by her experiencing it favorably. Unlike the sort of attraction or favorability that one might maintain is bound up with attributions of moral (or otherwise objective) goodness, basic attraction is characterized by its lack of any presupposed evaluative standards.

This is not to say that a subject’s affective experience can never result from her acceptance of such standards, nor even that it can never be answerable to them. Insofar as a subject takes such standards on board, such that they constitute part of her own perspective, she can indeed make herself answerable to them. On this view of the relevance of such standards to her well-being, they are explanatorily downstream of the basic account of what contributions to well-being consist in. They too will have their relevance to well-being explained in terms of affective experience, for such experience is what makes them an expression of one’s own evaluative point of view. I do not mean to deny that basic affective experience is sometimes reflective, as in the case of subject’s
carefully deliberating about what she values, or about what values to have. But in other instances, it is more or less *automatic*, as in the case of pleasure. The experience of pleasure does not involve deliberation in this way. Instead, the attraction involved in affective experience comes along as part of the experience itself.\(^\text{17}\)

On my account of the nature of well-being, something’s being good for a subject just is its being attractive to her in the way distinctive of affective experience. The value-involving element (“good”) is supplied by the subject’s own attraction, and the goodness is *for* her in virtue of the attraction being experiential, and so for her in the way that all experiences are for their subject. It is also for the subject in the further sense of its goodness depending only upon her own affective experience, rather than some independent evaluative standard, in the way that makes it basic.

So far, I have offered a conception of what it is for a mental state to ground the goodness of a contribution to well-being. I call such a grounding mental state a *determinant* of well-being. But in order to have a complete account of what it is for something to be intrinsically good for an individual, I need to make explicit what I take a *contribution* to well-being to involve. On my account, a contribution to well-being requires the existence of what *realizes* the value grounded by the kind of determinant I have described.\(^\text{18}\) But my view says that a contribution to well-being consists in more than this: it consists in the existence of what realizes the value grounded by a determinant mental state, *plus* the existence of the determinate mental state itself. The existence of a complex state of affairs of this kind is necessary and sufficient for a contribution to well-being, for the obtaining of a benefit to the subject.

\(^{17}\) The same, it should be said, is often true of various pro-attitudes—even valuing. These often occur in experience without antecedent reflection.

\(^{18}\) I am indebted to Andrew Lee for this way of formulating the view.
This inclusion of determinant mental states themselves as parts of contributions to well-being is supported by the fact that well-being plausibly consists in *intrinsic* goodness for a subject. Something has its goodness for a subject *intrinsically*, or *in itself*, only when what grounds the goodness for her is itself a part of what realizes or *bears* the goodness. This idea and the preceding account of goodness-for that it invokes are difficult to understand in the abstract. The next three chapters explain how in particular pleasure, desire-satisfaction, and what I call *person-involving goods* realize this value. This will elucidate the relevance of these goods to well-being, while at the same time elucidating in more concrete terms my conception of the nature of well-being. This way of proceeding reflects my background methodology: mutual elucidation of this sort is the hallmark virtue of wide reflective equilibrium.

There is a worry worth addressing here about the corresponding account of intrinsic *badness* for an individual. My account of this parallels what is set out in Constitutive Irreducible Goodness. The corresponding account of badness is therefore:

**Constitutive Irreducible Badness:** S’s mental state M grounds badness for S if and only if M is a token of mental state kind K, where K is irreducibly evaluative such that the complete, accurate characterization of any member of K includes negative evaluative predicates (“bad,” “negative,” “unappealing,” “unattractive,” and so on).

Clearly, the basic experiential attraction in which *positive* affect consists cannot be used to fill out the relevant kind K here. That is a job for the negative analogue of basic experiential attraction: what I will call, taking my cue from Scheler’s description earlier,

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19 Strictly speaking, including the determinant mental state as itself part of the contribution whose goodness it grounds is an optional feature of this view. One could drop this feature of my view and instead say of the goodness so grounded that it is *final* value for an individual. I thank George Sher for pointing this out to me. I opt for intrinsic value rather than final value because it seems to me to tell us something important about the structure of contributions to well-being. These considerations of structure emerge in my discussion of specific goods, especially desire-satisfactions.
basic experiential *repulsion*. This consists, unsurprisingly, in a subject’s experiencing something as *un*attractive or *un*favorable, one that does not involve an attribution of disfavorability according to some independent standard, but rather is a response-dependent property grounded by the subject’s own *negative* affective experience.

But now, you might worry, I have a problem: my theoretical appeal to Railtonian resonance breaks down, because we cannot appeal to resonance in explaining *badness* for individuals, too. In response to this worry, we can point out that what is intrinsically bad for someone *also* resonates with her. When something fails to resonate with a subject, it “leave[s] one cold or indifferent” (Bruckner 2016, 1). What is bad for a subject does not fail to resonate with her, but instead resonates *negatively*. It does *engage* her, to employ some more of Railton’s phraseology, but in a way properly characterizable as involving *badness* instead of goodness, *repulsion* instead of *attraction*, *negative* affect instead of *positive*. Railton’s remarks are about an individual’s own *good*, and he uses terminology tailored to that subject. But the substance of what he says about goodness for an individual carries over, *mutatis mutandis*, to badness for an individual.

### 3.3. How Goodness Can Be One’s Own

In order to finish this basic picture, I need to say a bit more about the sense in which *value of this kind is for* is subject. G.E. Moore denies that facts about well-being come to anything more than facts of the following sort:

> In what sense can a thing be good *for me*? It is obvious, if we reflect, that the only thing which can belong to me, which can be *mine*, is something which is good, and not the fact that it is good. When, therefore, I talk of anything I get as ‘my own good,’ I must mean either that the thing I get is good, or that my possessing it is good. In both cases it is only the thing or
the possession of it which is mine, and not the goodness of that thing or that possession (Moore [1903] 1976, 98).

On Moore’s view, the only sense that can be made of something’s being intrinsically good for someone is its being i) independently intrinsically good and possessed by them, or ii) possessed by someone such that the state of affairs consisting in their possessing it is good. A strict Moorean conception of well-being would therefore consist in a conception of intrinsic value simpliciter together with a conception of its possession. My conception of well-being, by contrast, consists in a conception of value-for together with an account of the respect in which it is intrinsic. According to my view, the form of value involved in well-being is essentially possessed by someone. It cannot be analyzed independently and then subsequently maintained to stand in some further, conceptually separable relation of possession.

Moore is clearly correct that the fact that x is good cannot be mine, because facts do not belong to anyone. Importantly, this is true even of facts about mental states. While mental states themselves necessarily belong to someone, the fact that S has some mental state does not itself belong to S. But this does not show that the goodness that figures in certain facts about S’s mental states fails to belong to S in any important sense. I claim that it does belong to S in the following sense: the fact that x is good (in a sense of goodness fixed by positive affective experience) depends upon S in a particular way. The fact itself does not belong to S. But the goodness that the fact involves does belong to her in virtue of the dependence, upon her, of the goodness.

Dependence of a fact on S does not suffice for that fact to belong to S. But dependence on S of the goodness that some fact involves might suffice for that goodness to belong to S. We can specify the goodness’s dependence upon S in terms of its being...
grounded by one of her mental states. This dependence renders goodness for $S$ in the *perspectival sense of ‘for’*—the sense in which all experiences are for their subject.\(^{20}\) This gives us, for now, a clear enough idea of how the relevant goodness can be for its subject. I take up this issue again in the next chapter as part of a more specific conception of pleasure, a conception that also must be introduced before we can specify the sense in which the resultant value is intrinsic.

4. Objections

For now, I close by clarifying and defending the basic picture that I have described by considering and responding to some potential objections.

4.1. The Fact-Value Gap

One might worry that my view violates the well-known *fact-value gap*, which prohibits inferences about or explanations of value-involving facts by way of valueless ones. It would indeed, if felt phenomenal value were not value-involving. But it is. The proposal on offer does not attempt to account for or express something value-involving (the good-for relation) in terms of something valueless, but rather in terms of something that is *already* value-involving. I am not claiming to bridge the gap between value-involving facts and valueless facts by inferring one from the other.\(^{21}\) Instead, I am pointing to certain facts, in my own conscious experience and in yours, and insisting that they are not valueless facts but value-involving facts. I am claiming to identify a class of facts whose existence is all but certain and whose essential nature is apparently value-involving. And

\(^{20}\) Kraut (2007, pp. 92-94) similarly refers to this as the *perspectival interpretation* of ‘for.’

\(^{21}\) Though see Lee (unpublished), who does attempt this project.
I am claiming further that reflection upon the nature of the kind of fact involved (facts about affectively-laden subjectivity), shows them to be really, and not just apparently, value-involving. I am claiming that because these facts are facts of subjectivity, they cannot be apparent without being really existent. And because their reality consists fundamentally in affect, making them indescribable except by appeal to irreducibly evaluative terms, the facts that they involve are value-involving facts.

But there might yet be a different violation of the alleged gap between evaluative and non-evaluative facts here. If phenomenal properties can be reductively characterized in terms of physical properties or processes, we would then have a reductive characterization of something evaluative (affective experience) in terms of something non-evaluative (the physical properties or processes). But notice this: facts about phenomenal consciousness in general are themselves notorious for resisting reductive explanation in terms of physical properties and processes, independently of their evaluative instances. What makes the hard problem of consciousness (Chalmers 1996, xii-xiii) so hard is that any reductive explanation of phenomenally conscious states seems to leave out the target explanandum: what the state is like for its subject (Nagel 1964). So long as such a reductive explanation of phenomenal consciousness cannot be had, my proposal does not involve a violation of gap between the evaluative and non-evaluative. And if such a reductive explanation of consciousness can be had after all, then a reduction of the evaluative to the non-evaluative can also be had. Affective value is a phenomenal property, so a successful reduction of phenomenal consciousness must involve a successful reduction of affective experience. Since affective experience is value-involving, it would then turn out that at least some of the evaluative can be reduced
to the non-evaluative after all. The implausibility of this is, of course, a further reason to doubt the plausibility of reductive explanations of phenomenal consciousness. But if, implausibility aside, we attempt to imagine finding that someone has convincingly done it, what we would be attempting to imagine would thereby include a successful reduction of (some of) the evaluative to the non-evaluative. The only other options would be to either to deny that affective experience is really value-involving, or to deny that we really experience affect. But these other options are too discordant with our own manifest experience to be plausible.

4.2. Reduction

The proposal on offer is therefore also not a reduction of the good-for relation in the way often thought pernicious or fallacious: one that identifies an evaluative property with a non-evaluative one.22 It explicates the good-for relation using phenomenal properties, but the relevant phenomenal properties are value-involving from the get-go.23 So the evaluative component (“good”) of the good-for relation is not being re-expressed in non- evaluative terms. Indeed, it is not being re-expressed at all. To say that it was being re-expressed would be to say that it was being expressed differently, in terms of something else that could be given independent characterization. But as we have seen, affective experience cannot be given independent expression. However, this addresses only part of the Moorean worry. Moore objects not only to the identification of evaluative properties with non-evaluative ones, but also to the identification of evaluative properties with

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22 See Moore (1903] 1976, 12-21). Here and elsewhere, I provide the original date of historical works in brackets when a precise date is available. Pagination refers to the more recent edition.  
23 Rawlette (2016, 116) responds to this worry similarly.
natural ones. A version of Moore’s open question argument might therefore yet threaten my view.

I cannot respond fully to this worry without first putting in place my account of the sense in which goodness-for can be intrinsic. So my full response to this objection will need to wait until I present that account in the next chapter. But here is a preview of my response: intrinsic-goodness-for is a complex concept, unlike the simple concept of goodness full-stop with which Moore was concerned. And this complexity might make it impossible to formulate a version of the open question argument against my view of well-being. It may be impossible to isolate what I claim constitutes the goodness component of the intrinsic-goodness-for relation in order to pose the Moorean question about it. For it may be the case that affective experience is not only indescribable in non-evaluative terms, but also that its value-involving nature cannot be intelligibly described without recognition of its being for someone (and, as I describe in the next chapter, its being appropriately characterizable as intrinsic). If the conceptual elements of intrinsic-goodness-for are bound together in this way, then we cannot pose the Moorean question until we have settled on a clear account of how they relate. And in order to do that, it seems we would need to complete the process of wide reflective equilibrium in order to arrive at a stable overall theory of well-being. And once we have done that, it is not at all clear that the Moorean question, even if it can be posed, will then strike us as open rather than closed.

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24 On this point, I am again indebted to Rawlette (2016).
4.3. Naturalism

One might at this point offer a worry from the other direction by asking whether my view is compatible with *metaphysical naturalism*. This is the view that the only entities that exist are natural ones, where the category of the natural consists in “something like those facts and properties as picked out and studied by the natural and social sciences (broadly conceived)” (Brink 1989, 22). In metaethics, the compatibility of a metaethical view with metaphysical naturalism is often taken to be a theoretical virtue, since it does not require us to introduce a new fundamental category (an independently existing order of value properties) into our ontology.

The fact of our subjectivity is a promising explanation of well-being regardless of whether or not we think subjectivity naturalizable in the relevant sense. We are likely to affirm the fact of our subjectivity regardless of whether or not we think it a natural fact in the sense described above. If we *do* think it a natural fact, that it has the properties described above make it a uniquely promising candidate for a naturalized account of value—or at least, value of the kind that well-being involves. If instead we *do not* think the fact of our subjectivity is a natural fact, but regard it as non-natural in some crucial respect, it will then still make good sense to explain well-being in terms of subjectivity. The fact of our subjectivity will, no less than if we are naturalists, have the affective value-ladenness that makes it a promising explanation. Rather than positing an independent realm of values, subjectivity has the potential to explain well-being in terms of something with which we are already *familiar*. A familiar *explanans*, even if non-natural, is preferable to one that is both non-natural and *mysterious*. Subjectivity, even if non-natural, is something with whose nature we are intimately acquainted (Strawson
So the suitability of subjectivity as an explanation of well-being is independent of subjectivity’s naturalness.

In appealing to phenomenal consciousness, my view takes a stand on the metaphysics of well-being. In doing so, it might seem to raise fraught questions about the metaphysics of value, such as that of how to fit value into an account of the natural world. The appeal to phenomenal consciousness, I think, provides an important inroad to answering such question. Like value, phenomenal consciousness is difficult to account for in naturalistic terms, or least in those of the physical sciences. The kinds of properties that phenomenal consciousness involves (appearances of, e.g., redness, painfulness, the taste of pineapple, the aroma of coffee, and so on) resist any such accounting, even though we have a firm understanding of their physical causes and correlates. These properties seem irreducible to the properties of the physical sciences; we cannot give reductive physical characterizations of them without leaving out their most distinctive features. Phenomenal character seems to be conceptually distinct from any possible combination of physical phenomena to which we might attempt to reduce it. But for all that, we can still be naturalists about the mind—just not reductive naturalists about it (Chalmers 2004).

If we are within our rights to make this claim about phenomenal consciousness, there exists the very attractive possibility that we are also within our rights to make it about certain evaluative properties, too. Because evaluative properties are also famously subject to a conceptual explanatory gap of this kind, they are a prime candidate for explanation in terms of phenomenal consciousness. Indeed, we would rightly be suspicious of any explanation of evaluative properties that did not leave the explanatory
gap intact. Explaining them in terms of phenomenal consciousness can—at least for the properties with which I am concerned here—provide real illumination while leaving the gap intact. I will remain agnostic about whether this strategy is workable for moral and aesthetic properties, though in the case of moral properties this strategy would clearly require an appeal to intersubjectivity rather than only individual subjectivity. But I am making the case that the properties of being intrinsically good and bad for individuals can be so explained.

4.4. Anti-Realism

One might offer a different worry about subjectivity’s suitability as an explanation well-being. If one is inclined to import distinctions from contemporary metaethics, they might characterize my view as an anti-realist metaphysics of well-being. Realism in metaethics is typically understood as the view that moral properties are mind-independent: they do not depend upon our subjective states for their existence. The view that moral properties do depend upon such states thus falls under the heading of anti-realism. This way of describing the situation suggests that such properties would then be trivial, not “real” in whatever way really counts. So one might worry that to claim that well-being depends upon subjectivity is to trivialize it, to say that it is not real in whatever way really matters.

One might have thought that if mind-dependent properties are not real in the way that matters, it would follow that the reality of mentality itself is also in doubt. But those who classify mind-dependent metaethical views as “anti-realist” typically are not proponents of a similar anti-realism about the mind. If the reality of mentality is not in

\[\text{\footnotesize 25} \text{ I thank Charles Siewert for putting the point this way.} \]

\[\text{\footnotesize 26} \text{ Lee (unpublished) defends related views about the explanatory gap but maintains that certain forms of conscious experience that benefit their subjects are counterexamples to the alleged gap.} \]
doubt—and indeed, cannot be (Descartes [1641] 2006)—neither should be the reality of the relations in which it stands to the extra-mental world and the properties those relations explain. As Hume remarks, “Nothing can be more real, or concern us more, than our own sentiments of pleasure and uneasiness” (Hume [1739/1740] 2009, 469). Our affective experiences are manifest within our own minds. It is our very experience of them in which their reality consists (Siewert 2014). To say that they are not real, then, would be to endorse a conception of reality that leaves out that which is most apparent and perhaps also most dear to us.

The classification of mind-dependent metaethical views as anti-realist must then instead be based upon the thought that mind-dependent properties, while as real as the mind itself, are not suitable candidates for an explanation of moral properties. Mind-dependent properties, the thought might go, are too particular, too enmeshed with one individual’s point of view. That is fair enough, but analogous reasoning does not impugn a view of well-being as mind-dependent. The very features of mind-dependent properties that make them a questionable *explanans* in the moral case render them uniquely well-suited in the case of well-being. When it comes to well-being, particularity and individuality characterize the phenomenon that is to be explained: *this* particular individual’s own good.

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27 Railton (1986b) defends a related line of argument.
28 See also (Chalmers 1996, xii), who writes, “It seems to me that we are surer of the existence of conscious experience than we are of anything else in the world,” and Strawson (2008, 21), who claims that “nothing in this life is more certain.”
5. Conclusion

This completes my initial case for understanding intrinsic goodness for an individual in terms of affective experience. I have made the case that affective experience offers a uniquely powerful explanation of well-being. But even if you do not accept the considerations adduced so far, you may yet accept affective experience as the best explanation of the nature of well-being for a very different reason: it does better than leading competitors at explaining what it is supposed to explain. The aim of the next three chapters is to show that this is true.
Chapter 2

Well-Being and Hedonic Experience

1. Introduction

Going back at least to Parfit (1984, Appendix I), there is a tendency to begin discussions of well-being with a rather swift dismissal of hedonism. While I also maintain that hedonism is false, I attempt here to recover certain of its insights that are often jettisoned along with the view itself. Though I think, as many others do, that hedonism falls to Nozick (1974, 42-45)’s experience machine objection, that objection does not invalidate certain attractive motivations of the view. The lesson of hedonism, I aim to show in this chapter, is that we should take these motivations on board but extend them beyond pleasure and pain alone.

Recall that according to hedonism, what is intrinsically good for individuals is pleasure and pleasure alone, and what is intrinsically bad for individuals is pain and pain alone. Furthermore, pleasures are good for individuals just in virtue of being pleasures, and pains bad for individuals just in virtue of being pains. A complete hedonist theory of well-being that took full advantage of the resources of wide reflective equilibrium would therefore include:

i) an account of pleasure and of pain

ii) a deeply explanatory account of how pleasure and pain so understood relate to the nature of well-being
iii) such that they are the only two kinds of bearers of well-being

You might worry that, in requiring (ii), I am stacking the deck against extant hedonist views. Given the presence in the literature of skepticism about whether the project described in (ii) can be successfully completed, you might think it unfair to require extant hedonist theories to speak to this concern. But given my aims, it should come as no surprise that I myself will provide an account of how hedonic states plausibly relate to the nature of well-being. This aspect of my view is friendly to hedonism. Those who remain committed to hedonism can accept my proposal for a deeper explanation of the relevance of hedonic states to well-being. They must then resist my arguments in favor of the relevance of other mental states to well-being, or give up hedonism.

I now turn to (i): providing an account of pleasure and pain. Accounts of pleasure and pain fall into two broad categories: phenomenological and attitudinal. Phenomenological accounts sub-divide into distinctive feeling theories and hedonic tone theories. Attitudinal theories are typically desire-based, though a notable exception is Feldman (2004)’s account on which pleasure is itself an attitude.

2. The Desire-Based Account

The most plausible and well-developed desire-based conception of pleasure is Heathwood (2007)’s.\(^\text{29}\) He puts his view this way:

\[
\text{a sensation S, occurring at time t, is a sensory pleasure at t iff the subject of S desires, intrinsically and } \text{de re, at t, of S, that it be occurring at t (Heathwood 2007, 32).}
\]

\(^{29}\) This is a desire-based conception of sensory pleasure in particular. Heathwood maintains that there are two other categories of pleasure: propositional pleasure and enjoyment (Heathwood 2007, 28). I will have more to say about propositional pleasure in my discussion of Feldman below.
Two conditions of Heathwood’s account are especially important to note. The first is the requirement of *concurrence*: that S desire the sensation at the time at which it is occurring. Heathwood motivates this requirement with cases in which you *previously* desired some experience, but no longer have this desire upon actually undergoing the experience. Second, Heathwood’s account requires that one desire the sensation *de re*. This requirement is designed to avoid Sidgwick’s case of *Dead Sea Apples*. While such apples look appealing, they are “only dust an ashes in the eating” (Sidgwick 1907, 110). Plausibly, the experience of eating a Dead Sea Apple is not a pleasure even if antecedently desired. Heathwood’s view secures this result, because one only desires the apple (or more properly, the *experience* of the eating) *de dicto* under a description that it does not actually meet, rather than desiring it *de re*. These requirements avoid important objections one might otherwise make to a desire-based account of pleasure.

However, desire-based accounts of pleasure are subject to another well-known worry: that they misdescribe hedonic experience. As Rachels (2000, 196) puts the point, “When you twist your ankle or jam your finger, the experience itself seems to hurt; the unpleasantness seems to be right there in it.” The unpleasantness of pain seems built right into the experience itself rather than being somehow injected into the experience from outside (via a desire to not be experiencing it). Desire-based theories of hedonic states cannot easily make sense of these seemings. They must maintain instead that pleasures and pains are in themselves *neutral* experiences that are only made to be positively or negatively valenced by other mental states: pro- and con-attitudes. This is a serious problem due to the plausibility of the thought that, when it comes to conscious experience, the having just consists in the seeming (Siewert 2014). That is, one might
think that there is no distinction between *seeming* unpleasantness and *actual* unpleasantness; actual unpleasantness just is a seeming with a certain character. If that is right, then for unpleasantness to *seem* to be right there in an experience *is* for it to be right there in the experience.

Desire-based accounts misdescribe not only the experience of hedonic states themselves, but also our experienced *rationale* for desiring pleasure and desiring not to be in pain. Reflection upon experience suggests that we desire pleasures *because of their pleasantness*, and desire not to be in pain *because of its painfulness*. Bramble puts the point well:

Felt-quality theories seem to have commonsense on their side. To many, it seems that we like or want pleasures *because* they are pleasurable, and hate and seek to avoid pains *because* they are painful. Why do I like or want the feeling of orgasm? Intuitively, it is because this feeling is pleasurable (or feels good). It does not feel good because I want it. *Why would I want it if not because it feels good?* Similarly, why do I hate the feeling of headache? It is because it is painful. It is not painful because I hate it. What is the feeling of headache even *like* without the painfulness? And why would I hate *that*? Attitude-based theories seem to get the order of explanation the wrong way around. (Bramble 2016, 91).

Desire-based accounts of pleasure are correct about the fact that we do often desire pleasure, and about the fact that we do often desire not to be in pain. But these accounts misdescribe the way in which we experience these desires as *making sense to have*. The *reason* that we want to have certain experience and want not to have others is that they feel a certain way. So it is not just that desire-based accounts get the experience of hedonic states themselves wrong; they get related forms of *self-reflective* experience wrong, too.

Despite this worry, desire-based accounts of hedonic states are often maintained to be the best accounts on balance in virtue of solving an infamously thorny problem: the
heterogeneity problem. This is the problem of accounting for what all pleasures have in common with one another. Feldman puts the problem this way:

Reflection on sensory pleasures quickly reveals an enormous phenomenological heterogeneity. Perhaps this can be expressed more simply: sensory pleasures are all “feelings”, but they do not “feel alike”. Consider the warm, dry, slightly drowsy feeling of pleasure that you get while sunbathing on a quiet beach. By way of contrast, consider the cool, wet, invigorating feeling of pleasure that you get when drinking some cold, refreshing beer on a hot day. Each of these experiences involves a feeling of pleasure—a sensory pleasure, in my terminology—but they do not feel at all alike. After many years of careful research on this question, I have come to the conclusion that they have just about nothing in common phenomenologically (Feldman 2004, 79).

This problem extends naturally to pains as well. But desire-based accounts are practically tailor-made to address it. What all pleasures have in common with one another is that they involve a desire whose intentional object is an experience, and what all pains have in common with one another is that they involve an aversion (a desire that something not be the case) whose intentional object is an experience. Phenomenological accounts of hedonic states, by contrast, are thought to have a harder time with the problem. As phenomenological accounts, they must point to some phenomenal commonality in the experiences themselves. As Feldman shows us with his contract case, this is no easy task. In order to decide between desire-based and phenomenological accounts, we must therefore determine how well phenomenological accounts can deal with the heterogeneity problem. Only then can we determine whether the fact that desire-based accounts solve the heterogeneity problem is worth their cost: apparently misdescribing experience.
3. Phenomenological Accounts

As I mentioned above, two major phenomenological accounts of hedonic states have been offered. According to the much-maligned distinctive feeling theory, what all pleasures have in common is a distinctive qualitative character (with the same going for pains). There is something that it is like to experience pleasure that is present in all and only pleasures, and something that it is like to feel pain that is present in all and only pains. Furthermore, what it is like consists in a feeling, as opposed to what it is like being properly characterized in terms of some other kind of qualitative character.

The hedonic tone theory claims something similar, but supposedly distinct. Adherents of this theory would be uncomfortable affirming the existence of a quale of pleasantness (and likewise for painfulness). On this theory, for an experience to be a pleasure is not to “contain” some distinctive positive feeling, but instead of to vary along a common dimension: positive hedonic tone. The same hold for pains, except that the dimension along which all pains vary is, unsurprisingly, negative hedonic tone.

My view is that we should accept a phenomenological account of hedonic states. Here it is natural to ask: which one—distinctive feeling or hedonic tone? I claim that it does not ultimately matter which theory one accepts, and that there may be no important distinction between the theories. These two phenomenological theories may not actually be as deeply opposed as is often thought. Proponents of these theories, it seems to me, disagree more about how to deploy terms like “feeling” and “phenomenal character,” the usefulness of various analogies for understanding hedonic experience, about whether there can be hedonic experience without awareness, and whether there can be purely hedonic experience, than they do about the fundamental nature of pleasure. Even if they
do disagree in some fundamental way about the nature of pleasure, it is not at all clear that those disagreements make a difference when it comes to achieving my aim: explaining the goodness of pleasure for its subject.

To see why, we need to look at the details of the two ostensibly distinct theories. The most prominent latter-day proponent of the distinctive feeling theory is Bramble (2013). Indeed, Bramble’s explicit aim is to return the distinctive feeling theory to its previous philosophical respectability by demonstrating its advantages over both desire-based and hedonic tone theories. Defenders of the hedonic tone theory include Kagan (1992), Crisp (2006), and Smuts (2011). Briefly retracing the dialectic between Bramble and these hedonic tone theorists will allow us to see just how much the theories have in common, as well as how each is, as stated, underspecified in a way that insights of the other fills in quite nicely.

In elucidating his theory, Crisp appeals to an analogy with color experience. According to this way of characterizing the hedonic tone theory, the kind pleasure is to particular pleasures what color experience is to experiences of particular colors. While the experience as-of some shade of blue is in many respects phenomenologically quite unlike the experience as-of some shade of red, the experiences do have something phenomenologically in common: each is an experience of hue. To solve the heterogeneity problem, Crisp thinks, we need only appeal to the determinable-determinate distinction. If we are careful to consider determinables in addition to determinates, the heterogeneity problem is no real problem at all.
Despite finding Crisp’s view “subtle and interesting,” Bramble maintains that “it cannot be right, because the analogy with colours is inapt” (Bramble 2013, 207). The similarity that Crisp has identified in all color experiences, Bramble says, is just that they are *experiences of some of the ways in which visual experience must come*. If you’re having a visual experience, then it must come in one or, more typically, some combination of, these shades of colours. If I am correct, then, still, no helpful analogy can be drawn with pleasant experiences. Pleasant experiences, clearly, are not *ways in which experiences associated with a particular sense must come*. Pleasant experiences can be visual, aural, gustatory, olfactory, tactile, or emotional (Bramble 2013, 207).

Bramble is (if we set aside questions about the phenomenon of *synesthesia*) correct that color experience is only associated with a single sense modality: vision. But why does this weaken the analogy? The answer seems to be that the point of the analogy is to elucidate the nature of hedonic experience, and any incompleteness in the analogy therefore signals a respect in which such elucidation is lacking. But this can be remedied by supplying an additional analogy: one in which a kind of experience figures in multiple sense modalities. Take for instance the experience of *shape*, which can be *visual* or *tactile*. If that seems to you to introduce a new disanalogy in virtue of invoking *shape concepts*, take instead simply the experience of *spatial position*, which figures in visual, tactile, and proprioceptive experience. We can use these further analogies to elucidate hedonic experience in terms of its cutting across various modalities of experience. We can then say that hedonic experience has both this property *and* the property elucidated by the prior analogy with color experience. Crisp’s analogy is helpful after all, even if it does not elucidate the *whole* truth about hedonic experience.

Kagan (1992)’s development of the hedonic tone theory relies on yet another analogy: that of the volume of auditory experience. Auditory experiences differ
qualitatively, Kagan says, but they share the property of being rankable along the single dimension of volume (Kagan 1992, 172-173. Pleasures also differ qualitatively in various respects, but so too do they share the property of being rankable along the single dimension of pleasantness. Bramble charges this analogy with inaptness on the following grounds:

[F]or most pleasant experiences, one can reduce their pleasantness to nothing, while leaving the experience intact, whereas one cannot ever reduce the volume of an auditory experience to nothing and still be left with the auditory experience in question (Bramble 2013, 209).

This claim rests on the idea that a particular experience E is a pleasant experience just in case E contingently involves pleasantness, while an experience E is an auditory experience just in case E essentially involves an experience of volume. But why think that? It seems preferable to instead say the following: in the same way that reducing the pleasantness of a total experiential state to zero renders it no longer a pleasure, even if it is still then an experiential state of some other kind, reducing the volume of a total experiential state to zero renders the experiential state no longer an auditory experience, even if it is still then an experience of some other kind.

So Bramble’s claim that “one can reduce… pleasantness to nothing, while leaving the experience intact” is misleading. Reducing pleasantness to zero leaves an experience intact, but the experience is no longer a pleasure, and it is unclear in what sense it could then remain the same experience. Even if we do say that it remains the same experience, the hedonic tone theorist could respond that not all dimensions of experience are alike. Suppose we grant that the best way to individuate experiences does imply that reducing the volume of an experience extinguishes the experience. (Presumably, we would secure this result by saying that an experience’s involving auditory phenomenal features
disallows its allowing phenomenal features of any other kind, implausible as saying this may be). The hedonic tone theorist could then reply that some dimensions of experience can be reduced to zero without eliminating the experience, while others cannot. Pleasantness would then be analogous to volume in being a dimension of experience, but not in being a dimension of experience the reduction of which to zero extinguishes the experience. Admitting that the volume of an experience is not analogous to the pleasantness of an experience in this sense does no harm to the hedonic tone theory. The hedonic tone theorist can use the analogy with volume to establish the idea of pleasantness as a dimension of experience, and then use a different analogy to elucidate the more specific idea of a dimension of experience that can be reduced to zero without extinguishing the experience. Consider, for example, the tactile experience involved in the experience of entering a hot bath. Removing all feeling of heat from this experience would not thereby extinguish the experience, which still recognizably contrasts phenomenologically with the experience of entering an empty bathtub.

To briefly sum up what I have claimed so far: while Bramble’s dialectic with Crisp and Kagan involves disagreement, it is far from obvious that the primary subject of that disagreement is the nature of hedonic experience itself. It seems mainly to consist in disagreement about the relative usefulness of various analogies, not the underlying phenomenon being elucidated. What is more, it is difficult to imagine either of the parties to the dialectic disagreeing with what has been said here. Surely, Bramble should admit that Crisp and Kagan’s analogies elucidate the nature of hedonic experience to some extent. Similarly, Crisp and Kagan should surely admit that their analogies do not give us
the whole story about hedonic experience. With that disagreement overcome, it is unclear that the remaining disagreement concerns the fundamental nature of pleasure at all.

Bramble’s dialectic with Smuts is even more telling. Smuts calls his version of the hedonic tone theory the feels good theory. Bramble takes Smuts’ claim that “To feel good is… well, to feel good” as Smuts’ core account of pleasure (Smuts 2011, 254 in Bramble 2013, 209), and also mentions Smuts’ metaphors of “warm glow” and “enticing hum” (Bramble 2013, 209). Bramble then writes:

While I share Smuts’ sense that all pleasant experiences are phenomenologically alike in some way, I cannot pretend that I find his metaphors at all helpful in clarifying for me what this way is. In fact, I have trouble assessing Smuts’ proposal because I do not really understand what it is (Bramble 2013, 209).

While I in turn share Bramble’s sense that Smuts’ view is somewhat difficult to understand, Smuts does give us a bit more to go on than Bramble mentions. In characterizing his view as a hedonic tone theory rather than as a distinctive feeling theory, Smuts notes two objections that supposedly apply to the latter but not the former: the distraction problem and the isolation problem. About the former, Smuts writes, “The feels good theory does not suffer from the distraction problem, since it does not propose that pleasure is a separate, distinct aspect of a sensation. Rather, the feels good theory holds that the sensation simply feels good overall. Hence, there is nothing to be distracted by” (Smuts 2011, 256). And about the latter, Smuts writes, “[S]ince the pleasure is not distinct from the experience, there is no isolation problem. It is expected that one cannot isolate the good feeling from the experience if the two are intimately connected” (Smuts 2011, 256).
But now compare these claims with Bramble’s ostensibly distinct theory, which he cashes out in terms of “what ‘the pleasant feeling’ must be like if it exists” (Bramble 2013, 209):

It would have to be the sort of feeling that can occupy an experience, and so make it count as pleasant, by permeating it. Clearly, if ‘the pleasant feeling’ exists, it does not make these sorts of experiences pleasant by being ‘tacked on to them’, so to speak, in any crude fashion. Instead, it must be the sort of feeling that can come in extremely low intensities, and very finely discriminable locations within one’s experiential field, so that it can come scattered throughout one’s experiential field. If the distinctive feeling theory is correct, and I enjoy listening to Bach, while you do not, then the difference between our experiences of Bach has got to be that mine is permeated by ‘the pleasant feeling’, while yours is not. In this way, ‘the pleasant feeling’ might ‘brighten’ a whole experience, or lend it a ‘warm glow’ (thereby giving substance to Smuts’ metaphors mentioned earlier)… (Bramble 2013, 210).

Is there a substantive difference between Smuts’ claim that a pleasant sensation “feels good overall” and Bramble’s claim that a pleasant sensation is instead one “permeated” by “the pleasant feeling”? Bramble puts his claim in terms of location, a characterization to which Smuts’ view does not seem amendable. This might seem to be a salient difference. However, Bramble goes on to say that

most instances of ‘the pleasant feeling’… occur in in extremely small quantities (or low intensities), and in very abstract or ethereal locations in one’s experiential field, locations that are not at all easy to direct one’s attention toward, or focus upon (Bramble 2013, 210).

The two views now begin to seem indistinguishable. The deployment of the idea of location in one’s experiential field was presumably metaphorical from the start, and it now turns out to be doubly metaphorical in light of the introduction of a notion of abstract location, which departs clearly from the ordinary conception of locations as discrete. Although Bramble seems to back off of this idea at one point, he does so only by claiming that the locations are discrete but virtually unknowable:
[An experience is a pleasure if] it has a whole lot of these tiny, independently virtually imperceptible, feelings scattered throughout it. (Bramble 2013, 210).

I take Bramble’s talk of these pleasant feelings as “independently virtually imperceptible” to mean that it is the whole that they together constitute, rather than each individually, to which we can reliably direct our experiential awareness. But one might think that our lack of awareness of individual bits of the pleasant feeling calls into question their very status as part of our experience at all.

Bramble would likely push back here, since he maintains that one can have hedonic experiences (even “whole” ones) without being aware of it (Bramble 2013, 204-206, 210-211). But this commitment cannot be what differentiates the distinctive feeling theory from the hedonic tone theory, and it is the differentiation of these theories that is at issue. A hedonic tone theorist who finds the idea of experience without awareness plausible might well maintain that we have hedonically-toned experiences without being aware of it. Likewise, a distinctive feeling theorist who did not find the idea of experience without awareness plausible would presumably maintain that we must be aware of individual bits of the pleasant feeling in order for them to count as part of our experience. So the difference between the two theories cannot consist in offering different answers to this question, since both answers are available to proponents of both theories.

So far as I can tell, Bramble should agree both with Smuts’ claim that pleasurable sensations feel good overall and with Smuts’ claim that a good feeling is intimately connected with the experience that it makes feel good—the term permeation readily suggests both of these ideas. The remaining prospects for differentiating the theories
consist in how to characterize a sensation’s feeling good overall and how to spell out the relevant “intimate connection.” On the first issue, Bramble might say that bits of the pleasant feeling occur at discrete locations in one’s experiential field that are discriminable \textit{in principle}, even though it is virtually impossible in the actual case of we introspectively-limited human beings. But one might maintain that the actual case is what matters: the indiscriminability of individual bits of the pleasant feeling in the actual case implies that they are not actually proper parts of our experiential field at all. And as we saw above, Bramble’s denial of this idea is not essential to the distinctive feeling theory.

On the second issue, Bramble might say that while the pleasant feeling is intimately connected with experiences that it permeates, it could \textit{in principle} exist independently of further experience. In other words, Bramble might affirm the possibility of \textit{purely hedonic experience}—experience consisting solely in hedonic phenomenology, rather than hedonic phenomenology permeating further phenomenal features. This is at least suggested by various qualifications that he makes to his view: speaking of what holds for \textit{most} pleasures in his response to Kagan, and saying in the long quote above that the pleasant feeling \textit{can} permeate experiences that have further features.

But the idea of purely hedonic experience can be challenged on independent grounds. It might be that every experience involves implicit self-awareness (Kriegel 2003). And even if it is not true that \textit{every} experience involves implicit self-awareness, hedonic tone theorists can still claim that alleged cases of purely hedonic experiences are actually experiences of this kind: experiences consisting solely in self-awareness, positively hedonically toned. This issue seems difficult, if not impossible, decide by appeal to introspection. And it is not clear how else it could be decided. Even if it could
be, the answer would not obviously have any important upshot for substantive questions in the theory of well-being. The parties to this debate are unlikely to disagree that alleged cases of purely hedonic experience are pleasures, and so intrinsically good for their subject. At most, hedonic tone theorists will attribute an additional phenomenal feature (implicit self-awareness) to these experiences that Bramble will deny they possess. But this seems an inadequate basis for explaining the goodness of these experiences for their subjects differently. I will now argue that, in fact, both distinctive feeling and hedonic tone theorists can explain this in the very same way.

4. A Unifying Account

That is because, on the best accounts of permeation by the pleasant feeling and positive hedonic tone, they come to the same thing. The same goes for permeation by the painful feeling and negative hedonic tone. None of the disputes described above, and none of the ways of settling them that I described, preclude these claims. And the truth of these claims is significant, for it shows that the two major phenomenological theories of hedonic states are not so much warring houses as they are convergent ways of thinking about the nature of pleasure and pain.\(^{30}\)

Each of the two major elucidations of the phenomenological theory is missing an important component: an explanation of the goodness of the pleasant feeling/positive hedonic tone. Claiming that we need a further explanation of this might initially strike you as misguided: the pleasant feeling/positive hedonic tone is by definition positively

\(^{30}\) Even if the theories can be differentiated in a way that does have upshots for substantive theorizing about well-being, it is no trouble for my theory. If they are the same, the truth that they both express comports with my conception of the nature of well-being; if they are different, the claims of each still comport with my conception of the nature of well-being, and the question of which one is true does not bear on the acceptability of my theory, but is instead a question for descriptive philosophy of mind.
valenced, favorable, something which feels good, etc., in a way that we can contrast with the painful feeling/negative hedonic tone, which is negatively valenced, unfavorable, something which feels bad, etc. So, one might think, it does not make sense to ask in virtue of what the pleasant feeling is good, and in virtue of what the painful feeling is bad. And it certainly is true that the experiential contrast can go some way in helping us to get a grip on the nature of these experiences. But we can still ask: what exactly is it for an experience to be positively/negatively valenced, and in what sense does this render such experiences good or bad for their subject? To do that is to fill out criterion (ii) from my specification earlier of what a complete hedonist theory of well-being would involve: an account of how pleasure and pain so understood relate to the nature of well-being.

The crucial link on my view is the idea of affective attraction, together with its opposite affective repulsion. The cases of pleasure and pain most often discussed in the well-being literature are ones that involve sensory experiences, but it is plausible enough to include also certain cognitive experiences (episodes of thinking and imagining)—so-called pleasures of the intellect. Pleasure on my conception is an overall experience in which sensory or cognitive phenomenal features are themselves experienced attractively. The attractiveness involved in the positive hedonic tone or pleasant feeling consists just in the subject’s attraction to sensory or cognitive phenomenal features: their presenting favorably in experience, in a basic way intelligible without appeal to some other, independent standard of favorability. The ideas of “permeation” and “tone” each help us to home in on the idea that the relevant sensory or cognitive features of experience as experienced favorably by the subject, as opposed to unfavorably, or with no felt valence at all.
Importantly, attraction in this sense is not an *attitude* on the subject’s part, in the sense of being a distinct mental state whose *object* is the sensory or cognitive features, as attitudinal accounts of pleasure claim.\(^{31}\) It is, as Bramble might say, *a way in which experience can come*. Experiencing one’s own sensory or cognitive phenomenal features as themselves attractive is simply a matter of their presenting in experience in a particular way: the way consisting in it being impossible to adequately describe them without appealing to positive, irreducibly evaluative language. In virtue of this, the relevant phenomenal features have the response-dependent property of being good for their subject.

So, what do the pleasures involved in the experiences of sunbathing on a warm beach, drinking a cold beer, having a good philosophical conversation, and imagining the face of a loved one all have in common? Each involves basic affective attraction to the various phenomenal features of these experiences, as part of the overall experiences themselves. They are heterogeneous in their non-affective features, but homogenous in their affective ones. The phenomenological theory, once filled out, provides a plausible solution to the heterogeneity problem after all.

### 5. Intrinsicality

Arriving at this solution allows me to now specify a robust sense in which pleasure’s goodness for its subject is *intrinsic*. I understand the value of some x as *intrinsic* if, but only if, x is both *source* and *bearer* of the value that it has, and so in this sense has it its value “in itself.” This conception of intrinsic value is due to Korsgaard (1996), who

\(^{31}\text{Though not itself an attitude, affective attraction does *figure in* some attitudes. As I will argue in the next chapter, it is what makes certain attitudes *pro*-attitudes. The same goes for affective repulsion and *con*-attitudes.}\)
argues that there is an ambiguity in philosophical thinking about intrinsicality as applied to goodness:

To say that something is intrinsically good is not by definition to say that it is valued for its own sake: it is to say that it has its goodness in itself. It refers, one might say, to the location or source of the goodness rather than the way we value the thing. The contrast between instrumental and intrinsic value is therefore misleading, a false contrast. The natural contrast to intrinsic goodness – the value a thing has “in itself” – is extrinsic goodness – the value a thing gets from some other source. The natural contrast to a thing that is valued instrumentally or as a means is a thing that is valued for its own sake or as an end. There are, therefore, two distinctions in goodness (Korsgaard 1996, 250).

The proposal here is to make both an intrinsic-extrinsic distinction and a final-instrumental distinction. Korsgaard shows convincingly that we need not take these distinctions as equivalent. For on one sort of view (most prominently defended by Kant), some things valued by rational beings have final value in virtue of being valued for their own sake rather than the sake of something else. Yet this value is extrinsic because the source of the value is rational agency itself; the rational act of valuing is what bestows value on the end. My account of well-being is structurally similar to this aspect of the Kantian view. On my view, however, it is affective experience that does the bestowing, without the need for the quite demanding Kantian capacity to give oneself the moral law.

I emphasize the importance of understanding well-being as intrinsic value for an individual in this sense because it promises a more comprehensive conception of the nature of well-being. The point of an account of well-being is to explain, in a way that gets as close to theoretical bedrock as possible, why some things count as contributions to well-being and others do not. That requires saying something about the structure of such contributions in a way that the concept of intrinsic value elucidates, while that of final value does not.
On the conception of hedonic states that I have offered, the case for their value being intrinsic in Korsgaard’s sense is straightforward. Such states are the source or ground of their value because they themselves are what instantiate the affect, thereby bringing the value into existence. They are also the bearers of the resultant value because it is the phenomenal features of the experience themselves that present positively or negatively, in those very experiences. They have their value “in themselves” in as robust a way as anything possibly could, all while depending on their subject’s perspective in a way that renders credible the claim that the relevant intrinsic value is for that subject.

6. A Dilemma for Desire-Based Accounts

The unified phenomenological account described above provides a plausible solution to the heterogeneity problem. This is a serious blow to desire-based accounts which owe much of their plausibility to their ability to solve a problem that the phenomenological account allegedly cannot. The case against desire-based accounts becomes even more conclusive when we ask whether they can convincingly solve the heterogeneity problem. On this score, desire-based conceptions of pleasure face a dilemma: such accounts appeal either to a phenomenological conception of desire, or they appeal to a non-phenomenological conception.

If the conception of desire is non-phenomenological, the desire-based account of pleasure does furnish a clear solution to the heterogeneity problem: there is a background mental state, desire, that transforms otherwise neutral experiences into pleasures and pains. This of course gives rise to the charge of misdescribing experience, but it is at least formally a solution to the heterogeneity problem. This beneficial result, however, must be
weighed against drawbacks that then become apparent. Non-phenomenological desires are, on reflection, not the right sort of desire to appeal to in explaining well-being. One of the leading motivations for appealing to desire in theorizing about well-being is to fulfill Railton’s resonance constraint. But as I argued in the previous chapter, resonance is most naturally understood as involving phenomenal experience. Recent developments of desire-based views of well-being reflect this idea, appealing to phenomenological desire (conceived so as to explicitly involve experienced attraction) in their explanations of well-being and affirming it as the right kind of desire to do this theoretical work (Bruckner 2016; Lin 2016a; Heathwood 2019).

Of course, someone might buck this trend of maintaining that non-phenomenal desire is the wrong kind of desire to which to appeal. Someone might claim instead that the fulfillment of non-phenomenal desires does contribute to well-being. But anyone who does so is committed to thinking that the lives of phenomenal zombies could go well or poorly for them (Levy 2014). This is a deeply implausible position, for reasons that I discuss more fully in the next chapter.

At present, however, we are talking about hedonic states, and these are states that a phenomenal zombie could not have. Even if desire is non-phenomenological, the states that these desires make into pleasures and pains are phenomenal experiences. So someone putting forward a desire-based account of hedonic states must, assuming that she is going to claim that pleasure is relevant to well-being, claim that the fulfillment of such desires is necessary, but not sufficient, for certain contributions to well-being. The other necessary condition, she must say, is that such desires must have experiences as their objects in order to contribute to well-being. But then it appears that the explanatory
work is being done by experience and not by these desires. The view described claims that desire-fulfillment is eudaimonically worthless except when the desires have a particular kind of object. This suggests that it is really the object-type that is conferring worth on the desires; such desires are taken in an antecedently significant kind of object. But how then can these desires explain why these experiences have the evaluatively significant property of being pleasures, of being experiences worth having? This seems fatal to the account of hedonic states on offer: once it is admitted that non-phenomenological desires are not generally relevant to well-being, it becomes unclear why they would become explanatorily relevant solely due to having a particular kind of object. The desire-based conception of pleasure is back to square one.

A proponent of a desire-based conception of pleasure might instead take the other horn of my dilemma, claiming that desire is itself importantly phenomenological.32 But if desire is itself phenomenological, then the heterogeneity problem arises again. As conceptions of pleasure, desire-based conceptions must plausibly apply to paradigmatic cases of pleasure. We can therefore ask what desiring the experience of sunbathing on a warm beach has in common with desiring the experience of a drinking a cold beer, and so on. Note that the answer to this question cannot simply be: “Each is desired.” On this conception of pleasure, pleasure is a complex state consisting of i) an experienced desire whose object is ii) another experience. It is no part of this account of pleasure that this complex state must itself be desired (and if it were, an infinite regress would loom). Rather, the complex state consists in an experienced desire with the right object (another experience). But if pleasure is desired experience, and all desires share a common

32 Lin (2018) suggests various versions of this view. I discuss what I take to be the most plausible, on which pleasures are complex states of affairs consisting of a desire and the experience that is its object. But what I say about this view applies to the other views he discusses.
phenomenology, then it should be introspectively obvious that all pleasures share a common phenomenology. Proponents of desire-based views of pleasure, however, motivate these views by appeal to the heterogeneity problem, which denies this. While it is open to them to give up that line of argument, doing so then leaves it unclear why we should interpret the common feature shared by all pleasures as a further, conceptually separable experience of desire. The charge of misdescribing experience rears its head again: as Rachels would say, I experience the unpleasantness of twisting my ankle as *right there in the experience* of how my ankle then feels, not in some add-on to the experience via desire or any other further state. Once proponents of the desire-based theory grant that all pleasures *do* share a common phenomenology after all, phenomenological theories of pleasure become clearly preferable in virtue of providing a more plausible account of what this comes to.

Though introspectively dubious, desire-based analyses of pleasure are claimed to have a significant theoretical virtue: solving the heterogeneity problem. One might have thought that sufficient to make them plausible on balance despite the serious shortcoming of misdescribing experience. But desire-based analyses of pleasure on which desire is itself phenomenological do not solve the problem. Since they do not, they lack the theoretical virtue that was supposed to outweigh the significant shortcoming of misdescribing experience. We are left only with the shortcoming, and that renders such an analysis of pleasure unmotivated.\(^\text{33}\)

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\(^{33}\) Someone with a desire-satisfactionist theory of *well-being* might claim now that their view has the virtue of vindicating explanatory *monism* about well-being, and that this is worth taking on all of the costs implied by what I have said. But my theory of well-being vindicates monism in the way that matters without taking on these costs. Moreover, so too does hedonism. In this respect, at least, the hedonist with a phenomenological conception of pleasure is better off than the kind of desire-satisfactionist described here.
Crucially, none of this tells against phenomenological conceptions of desire. In fact, it works in their favor. The failure of phenomenological desire-based accounts of pleasure, combined with the irrelevance of non-phenomenological desires to well-being, suggests that there is a phenomenological solution to problem of the heterogeneity of pleasures. This solution, I will argue in the next chapter, carries over to what we might think of as analogous problem of the heterogeneity of desires: the problem of arriving at a conception of the sort of desire that plausibly figures in a theory of well-being. Because there are so many disparate accounts of desire, the problem is one of deciding which such account is relevant to a theory of well-being in virtue of, first, accurately describing an aspect our mental life (i.e. picking out a kind of mental state that we actually undergo) possessing characteristic features of the folk psychological idea of desire that, second, plausibly figures in our well-being. As Heathwood (2019) points out, it does not matter if, in the end, we even care to call such states desires. What matters is that we experience them and that they are relevant to well-being, independently of pleasure. So the failure of desire-based conceptions of pleasure is actually good news for those who defend the relevance of desire to well-being. It leaves the door open for desire to explain some contributions to well-being in its own right, in a way that does not require an account of how desire explains the nature of pleasure.

7. The Experience Machine

I have said many laudatory things about hedonism’s aims, insofar as a phenomenological version of hedonism affirms the goodness of pleasure and the badness of pain for individuals in a way that links up with a plausible conception of the nature of well-being
itself. Why then do I reject hedonism? Part of the answer is that the conception of the nature of well-being that I offer implies that pleasure and pain are not the only contributors to well-being. My conception implies, of certain other mental states, that they too explain some contributions well-being. In the next chapter, I show how it implies this about desire, understood as involving affective experience.

But the case in favor of my theory would be stronger if there were independent reason for believing hedonic states not to be the sole contributors to well-being. The fact that my conception of the nature of well-being implies that there is a plurality of mental states that contribute to well-being provides some reason for accepting this claim of plurality. But we only achieve wide reflective equilibrium if our judgments about cases and principles that systematize these judgments also imply this. Fortunately, they do. Nozick (1974, 42-45)’s experience machine objection to hedonism is just such a consideration.

Suppose that you are offered the chance to plug into a machine that will perfectly simulate any experience you can think of. The machine will give you whatever experiences you tell the programmers to program in. Importantly, once you are plugged into the machine, you will not know that you are. You will forget all about the existence of the machine, the fact that you decided to plug in, what you told the programmers to program in, and so on. So, you will not be at all troubled by the fact that you are living a simulated life, since you will not be aware of this. Life in the machine will involve a large amount of pleasure, with little or no pain, such that your net pleasure is higher than it would be if you went on living a normal life. Now, would you sign up for such a life,
given the choice? Does it strike you as the life that it would be in your best interest to live, relative to the alternative? The intuitive answer is: No.

Insofar as hedonism implies that it is in our best interest to plug into the experience machine, it is deeply implausible as a complete theory of well-being. Plugging into the experience machine would sever our connection to too many other important aspects of typical human life; it would leave out too much that we reflectively take to be relevant to our good. Indeed, this is part of what drives me to think attitudes relevant to well-being in addition to hedonic experience. Though grounded in our experience, our attitudes reach outside of us, taking objects beyond the confines of the experience machine.

I mentioned earlier one other view of pleasure but did not discuss it in detail: Feldman (2004)’s view on which pleasure is itself an attitude. You would be right to wonder whether Feldman can come to hedonism’s rescue here. He puts his basic view of attitudinal pleasure this way:

A person takes attitudinal pleasure in some state of affairs if he enjoys it, is pleased about it, is glad that it is happening, is delighted by it. So, for example, supposed that you are a peace-loving person. Suppose you take note of the fact that there are no wars going on. The world is at peace. Suppose you are pleased about this. You are glad that the world is at peace. Then you have taken attitudinal pleasure in a certain fact—the fact that the world is at peace (Feldman 2004, 56).

Attitudinal pleasures are always intentional, or directed toward an object. Furthermore, Feldman’s attitudinal hedonism is truth-adjusted—it weighs attitudinal pleasures with true objects (i.e. objects that actually obtain) more than attitudinal pleasures taken in false objects (i.e. ones whose objects do not obtain) (Feldman 2004,
Feldman’s view therefore implies that plugging into the experience machine would not be a wise move after all, since many of the pleasures that one would there undergo are non-veridical. Someone in the experience machine who takes propositional pleasure in the apparent fact that she just climbed Everest, or was elected president, or was offered a tenure-track job, is actually much less well-off at that moment than she thinks, for her pleasure is non-veridical. It counts on Feldman’s view for something, but for far less than its veridical counterpart would.

So Feldman’s account generates more plausible results about the experience machine. It avoids the consequence that we should plug into the experience machine, while allowing that life in the experience machine would still involve some positive contributions to well-being. But as an attitudinal view of pleasure, it shares the apparent misdescription of the experience of pleasure that I attributed to desire-based accounts. For Feldman’s view is that sensory pleasures are attitudinal pleasures taken in the fact that one is having some sensation (Feldman 2004, 79-81). Though he appeals to a different attitude than desire-based theorists, he attempts to account for the pleasantness of sensory pleasure in terms of an external attitude. And this brings along with it the same sorts of problems I described above.

Nonetheless, it is a step in the right direction for hedonists to invoke the relevance of attitudes to well-being, for this allows us to go beyond hedonism and its woes stemming from the experience machine. But this is not worth the cost of leaving behind hedonism’s important insight that some experiences contribute to our good just in virtue

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[^34]: Feldman seems to suggest that propositional pleasures with true objects should receive a multiplier of 1.0, while propositional pleasures with false objects should receive a multiplier of 0.1. I suspect that these numbers may be up for negotiation to some extent, but the key idea is to weight veridical pleasures much more than non-veridical ones.
of being experienced. A maximally plausible theory of well-being will appeal to both experiences of this kind and experiences that set satisfaction conditions in virtue of being attitudes. Running together these two forms of experience in the name of explanatory monism is not the answer, because we can secure monism by appealing to affective experience.

If, as I maintain, we can be monists in the way that matters without running together these two forms of experience, the temptation to reduce one of the forms of experience to the other dissipates. We can avoid the experience machine objection by appealing to attitudes, without giving up on there also being purely experiential contributions to well-being. In order to persuade you of this, of course, I must make the other half of the case: that which involves explaining the relevance of experienced attitudes to well-being. I do so in the next chapter, using desire as the base case.

Before that, however, I need to describe the sense in which my theory so far is an importantly subjectivist theory, and show how this matters for addressing the Moorean open question argument applied to the theory.

8. Subjectivism and Objectivism

First, some preliminaries. We have already seen that theories of well-being can make two different kinds of claims. First, they can make claims about the bearers of well-being—the class of things that have or possess intrinsic goodness and badness for individuals. Second, they can make claims the grounds of well-being—that which explains why the relevant bearers have such properties. We need this language of bearers and grounds to make proper sense of another important distinction: that between subjective and objective
theories of well-being. We can contrast one popular way of thinking about subjectivism (in terms of the attitude-dependence of well-being) with what is, for present purposes, a preferable way: the dependence of well-being on phenomenal experience.

8.1. Subjectivism as Attitude-Dependence

Consider first a formulation of subjectivism in terms of attitude-dependence, one that I will refer to as Subjectivism$_{\text{ATT}}$:

Subjectivism$_{\text{ATT}}$: a theory is subjective just in case it implies the following: that something is intrinsically good for someone just in case either (i) she has a certain pro-attitude toward it, or (ii) it itself involves a certain pro-attitude of hers toward something (Heathwood 2014, 205).

On this version of the distinction, a theory of well-being is therefore objective just in case it implies the falsity of both (i) and (ii). I refer to this conception as Subjectivism$_{\text{ATT}}$ in order to mark its appeal to attitudes, which distinguishes it from the alternative conception whose theoretical utility I defend.

Subjectivism$_{\text{ATT}}$ is formulated disjunctively in order to take account of an intramural dispute between defenders of the attitude-dependence of well-being. This dispute concerns how to individuate the facts or states of affairs that count as intrinsically good for individuals. When an attitude-dependence theorist claims “x is intrinsically good for S,” what sort of fact or state of affairs should she substitute for the variable? Should she substitute only the existence of the object of S’s attitude? Or should she instead substitute a complex state of affairs consisting in both the existence of the object of S’s attitude and S’s having the attitude?\(^{35}\) We can (for now) remain neutral on this issue by

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\(^{35}\) See Dorsey (2013) for a more detailed formulation of the dispute and a defense of object-plus-attitude option. While this dispute might seem insignificant, I argue in Chapter 3 that it has important implications for whether attitudes can ground properly intrinsic value.
describing Subjectivism\textsubscript{ATT} as the view that intrinsic-goodness-for is grounded either by attitudes or the relations essentially involved in the having of attitudes, a description that allows for either possibility without being disjunctive in any problematic way.\footnote{Hall and Tiberius (2016, 176) Heathwood (2016, 135), Lin (2016b, 332), and Lin (2016c, 100) understand subjectivism similarly.}

Some recent theorists have problematized understanding the distinction between subjectivism and objectivism in terms of attitude-dependence. Fletcher (2013), for example, proposes a particular objectivist theory of well-being. His list has the following members: achievement, friendship, happiness, pleasure, self-respect, and virtue. But, he says, “all of these goods have pro-attitudes as necessary components” (Fletcher 2013, 216). For example, part of what it is to possess friendship is to have a pro-attitude toward one’s friend. Part of what it is to possess self-respect is to have a pro-attitude toward oneself. If Fletcher is right, objectivists need not view our attitudes as irrelevant to our well-being. Furthermore, Fletcher argues that the most plausible objective list theories will include on their lists only objective goods and bads that involve pro-attitudes as constituents, allowing these theories to respect the resonance constraint on theories of well-being.

Does this threaten the very idea of a principled distinction between objectivism and subjectivism? No. Each of Fletcher’s candidate objective good’s dependence on attitudes is only a shallow form of dependence. In each case, attitudes are merely parts of bearers of well-being. Their status as attitudes, and as mental states more generally, enjoys no greater theoretical significance than this; they do not play any special role in explaining the contributions of which they are parts. There is a clear historical parallel to Fletcher’s view of intrinsic-good-for: Moore (1912)’s view regarding intrinsic goodness.
simpliciter. In the later stages of his thinking, Moore maintained that all intrinsic goods have some relation to consciousness; no intrinsic good is entirely mind-independent. In fact, Moore claims that any intrinsic good or bad will doubly involve consciousness. He writes, “[N]othing can be an intrinsic good unless it contains both some feeling and also some other form of consciousness” (Moore 1912, 249). According to Moore, each of the things upon which goodness supervenes has mental states as constituent parts. But Moore seems to have continued to maintain his commitment to the unanalyzability of goodness in terms of anything more fundamental.37

That commitment makes it impossible for him to claim that mental states play any role in explaining intrinsic goodness. On the later Moorean view, every intrinsic good includes mental states as component parts, but this fact does not tell us anything informative about the nature of intrinsic goodness. On Moore’s view, there is nothing informative to say by way of analysis of this property. While the later Moore’s combination of views is coherent, it is implausible. The fact that each and every bearer of some property, P₁, also share some other property, P₂, and no other common properties, at least suggests that there is an explanatory relationship between P₁ and P₂. Moore’s commitment to the unanalyzability of intrinsic goodness precludes him from even considering the possibility of any such relationship, and he therefore seems committed to it being a kind of monumental “cosmic coincidence”38 that unanalyzable, objective intrinsic goodness just happens to track the presence of certain properties of consciousness.

37 See Moore ([1903] 1976, 15-17) for his early statement of this view.
38 See Bedke (2009).
In much the same way, the Fletcherian objective list theorist is committed to maintaining that attitudes do not have anything to do with the nature of intrinsic goodness for an individual. Attitudes are among the bearers of this property, but this fact tells us nothing at all about the nature of the property. The objective list theorist’s account of that will involve presumably involve an explication of the kind of objective goodness involved (though this may simply amount to claiming, like Moore, that the concept of goodness is an unanalyzable primitive), as well as how such value can be for its subject.  

So, like Moore, the Fletcherian objective list theorist is committed to a kind of monumental cosmic coincidence: every member of the list of goods involves a pro-attitude as a necessary component, but this tells us nothing interesting about the nature of well-being. Subjectivists_{ATT}, on the other hand, have theoretical room to say just this. And that suggests that what is most important about the subjectivism-objectivism distinction is that it picks out competing claims about well-being’s fundamental nature. But I now argue that subjectivism_{ATT} does not carve up competing claims about well-being’s fundamental nature in the way that gets at what is most important.

8.2. Subjectivism as Mind-Dependence

Kagan claims that, if hedonists reject desire-based views of pleasure, then hedonism must be classified as a one-item objective list theory of well-being (Kagan 1992, 175). Kagan calls this view objective hedonism, and he claims that its proponents “must insist that it is simply a fact that certain mental states, namely the pleasant ones, are objectively good for the person to have” (Kagan 1992, 178). I agree that hedonism so understood should be classified as an objective theory of well-being. Like Fletcher’s objective list theory of

39 On the latter issue, see Fletcher (2013).
well-being and Moore’s theory of intrinsic goodness *simpliciter*, objective hedonism affords significance to hedonic states only as *bearers* of well-being. It affords them no robust role as grounds, as what explains the goodness involved in their being intrinsically good for their subject. Instead of an explanation of that sort, objective hedonism offers only an *insistence*: “that it is simply a fact that certain mental states, namely the pleasant ones, are objective good for the person to have” (my emphasis).

To offer only an insistence on this point, it seems to me, is to appeal to a notion of truth that is *unearned* rather than *earned* (Blackburn 1984, 170, 195-196; McDowell 1998). The canonical statements of this distinction are decidedly polemical, but they get the point across. To appeal to an *unearned* notion of truth in some domain is to “just take those things for granted… the stultifying position that everything is just in order without our bothering to explain it” (Blackburn 1984, 196). Appealing to an unearned notions of truth in ethics “explands reality by mere postulation… to include an extra population of value-involving states of affairs or facts” (McDowell 1998, 153). We appeal to an unearned notion of truth in ethics when, for some ethical concept of set of such concepts, we improperly help ourselves to the idea that there are mind-independent facts consisting in their applying to the world in more or less the way we already think they do.

The reason that we need to *earn* the right to truths about well-being is that it is not obvious, prior to theorizing about it, what exactly we *mean* when we talk about well-being. We do not, prior to a lot of quite difficult theoretical work, have a clear sense of just what well-being and truths about it come to. (As evidence of this, I offer up philosophy’s long search for an adequate conception of the good life, including its struggle to even articulate the very idea of good-for, distinct from goodness *simpliciter*.)*
And that implies that it is equally unclear just what *truths* or *facts* regarding well-being consist in: it is unclear, in advance of inquiry, just how to characterize the nature of such truths or facts.\(^{40}\) Hence my methodology: going through the rigmarole of wide reflective equilibrium, done Rawls’ way, including providing an explanatory detour via an analogue of his contract apparatus. The significance of this detour for justification now becomes more apparent: taking the detour though a conception of the nature of well-being earns us the right to truths about well-being by specifying just what these truths come to.

Now back to objective hedonism, and an alternative. Rather than simply insisting that it is a fact that pleasure is objectively good for those who experience it, hedonists might instead say something more. They might, instead, offer the conception of pleasure in terms of affective experience that I have here, framed with reference to a conception of the nature of well-being that gives them a deeper story about what truths about it amount to. We actually need not think this deeper story *better* than that of objective hedonism to recognize it is a *different* story, one that makes it fundamentally distinct from the explanation offered by objective hedonism and other objective list theories.

This is a reason for classifying hedonism of the kind I have described, *affective* hedonism, as a subjectivist theory of well-being. Its explanatory strategy contrasts with those of objective hedonism and objective list theories, making it a much closer cousin of desire-based hedonism (hedonism plus a desire-based view of pleasure), which is widely agreed to be a subjective theory. In addition, affective hedonism is not a subjectivist theory by the lights of subjectivism\(^\text{ATT}\), yet has features closely associated with subjectivist\(^\text{ATT}\) theories of well-being (e.g., preservation of the resonance condition and

\(^{40}\) I adapt this idea from McDowell (1998, 164)’s more general employment of it.
dependence of well-being on an individual’s own evaluative outlook). Furthermore, if we think of desire of the kind relevant to well-being as itself affective, as Heathwood and others do,\textsuperscript{41} then the best version of the desire-based view of well-being will also appeal to affect. Classifying that kind of view as subjectivist while classifying affective hedonism as objectivist is highly counterintuitive: the two theories appeal to the same fundamental entity in their conception of the nature of well-being. (In the next chapter, I propose this as a reason for combining them.) For these reasons, we should reject subjectivism\textsubscript{ATT} as the fundamental way of drawing the subjectivism-objectivism distinction. I opt instead for subjectivism\textsubscript{MEN}, according to which a subjectivist theory of well-being is one that earns its right to truth by appealing to some feature of our mental life, \textit{qua} subjects of experience.\textsuperscript{42} I understand objectivism\textsubscript{MEN} as the claim that we earn our right to truths about well-being in some other way.

9. The Deep Problem and the Open Question Argument

We have nearly reached the point at which I can offer my full response to worries stemming from Moore’s open question argument, which I promised in the last chapter to address here. Before I do so, we need to return again to what Bradford (2017) calls the Deep Problem for theories of well-being.

9.1. The Deep Problem

Bradford homes in on some of the fundamental issues of explanation in the theory of well-being that I have been discussing. Recall again her Deep Problem. Bradford’s

\textsuperscript{41} See, again, Bruckner (2016), Lin (2016a), and Heathwood (2019).
\textsuperscript{42} See Rosati (1996, 299, fn. 5), Sobel (2005, 437), and Ferkany (2012, 475) for similarly broad conceptions of subjectivism.
particular topic is whether perfectionism about well-being can provide a satisfying, unifying explanation of the various candidate goods proposed by objective list theories. She thinks that perfectionism supplies a common feature of these candidate goods: they all involve the development of human capacities. However, perfectionism faces the problem of showing how this common feature explains the goodness of the candidate goods. She calls this “the Deep Problem”:

[T]his is not an explanation of why the things on the list are good. We already have strong intuitive support that objective list items are good. The task of perfectionism is to explain their goodness. But it’s not clear just how it does the explanatory work; it unifies, but how does it explain goodness? It is a descriptive account of what is common among the things on the list. Perfectionism can identify additional items to add to the list and help us identify imposters. But it is not clear how it explains why developing the capacities would be good (Bradford 2017, 354).

The Deep Problem, Bradford points out, is a general issue affecting any theory of well-being, not just perfectionism. We saw in the last chapter the views categorized as “explanatory theories” of well-being identify a common feature shared by the constituents of well-being in this way. But this invites Bradford’s further question: in what way does this common feature explain the goodness of the constituents?

Answering this question would amount to a theory of well-being earning its right to truth in the way that I described in the previous section. It would involve saying something substantive about the nature of well-being in a way that appropriately connects to the nature of the candidate goods. It is significant that any theory of well-being must do this in order to respond adequately to the Deep Problem. I now show the relevance of this fact in relation to the open question argument.
9.2. Conclusion: The Open Question Argument

A Moorean open question argument against my view as developed so far would take the following form. We would ask, of an instance of pleasure suitably characterized in terms of affective experience, whether it really is intrinsically good for its subject. If that question strikes us as open, if it seems a sensible question to ask rather than one whose answer is by definition “Yes” given our understanding of the meanings of the terms involved, then I have illegitimately identified well-being with a natural property with which it is not, after all, identical.

My response, in light of the machinery developed in this chapter, is as follows. First, this version of the open question argument employs an unearned notion of truth. It presumes that we could know the truth of the sentence “This instance of pleasure, suitably characterized in terms of affective experience, is intrinsically good for its subject” just in virtue of its meaning. But, as I argued above, we cannot know the meaning of intrinsic-goodness-for without knowing its fundamental nature. And we cannot know that in advance of an inquiry that supplies us with an understanding of what truths about well-being come to. An open question argument against my, or any, theory of the nature of well-being prior to a full process of wide reflective equilibrium whose output is that theory illegitimately presumes that we could have an antecedent grip on the notion of truths about well-being.

Suppose instead that we ask the Moorean question after a full process of wide reflective equilibrium. Another difficulty is this: because intrinsic-goodness-for is a complex, relational property, it is not clear that we could isolate the goodness component

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43 I make no claim about whether Moore’s employment of the argument against naturalism about goodness simpliciter does this.
and ask the Moorean question about that. The *goodness* component might be too bound up with the *intrinsicality* and *forness* components to allow for this. And if we instead ask the Moorean question about the whole complex, relational property, it is unclear that we can simultaneously keep clear in our minds all of the conceptual elements of this property in order to properly assess their combined meanings, even if we could have an antecedent grip on what truths involving this property would come to. And in order to ask the Moorean question, we would need to do not only this, but also simultaneously hold in our mind the meanings of the various conceptual elements I have identified in my conception of pleasure, which are themselves highly complex. This problem applies to asking the Moorean question about *any* theory of well-being purporting to solve Bradford’s Deep Problem: such theories are bound to offer explanations complex enough that simultaneously fixing the meanings of their various elements in our minds in order to ask the Moorean question may not be possible.

Recall also that we are now asking the Moorean question after a full process of wide reflective equilibrium. A full process of wide reflective equilibrium, I have claimed, will supply us with a conception of the nature of well-being that thereby also supplies us with a grasp of what truths about well-being come to. And that is just to say that it is the process of wide reflective equilibrium itself that supplies us with an adequate account of what we mean when we invoke the concept of well-being. So wide reflective equilibrium is itself a way of closing the Moorean question by satisfactorily fixing the meaning of intrinsic-goodness-for. Wide reflective equilibrium, if successful, arrives at an equilibrium point from whose vantage the Moorean question is closed.
1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show how my view captures what is best in desire-based theories of well-being. I claim that the best version of desire-based theories will understand desire as involving affect in a way captured by my conception of affect. While it is true that every hedonic state is an affective experience in my sense, the converse does not hold. On my account, an affective state is hedonic when what it presents positively or negatively are one or more phenomenal features of the experience itself. But an experience can present something other than its own phenomenal features positively or negatively. Desires, understood as involving affect in my sense, do just this by presenting their intentional objects positively or negatively.\(^{44}\)

This is significant, because it allows us to distinguish between affective experiences that contribute to well-being just in virtue of being experienced and those that do not. Hedonic states contribute to well-being just in virtue of being experienced. But merely having a desire does not. We can explain these facts in terms of the differential structure of hedonic and non-hedonic affective states. Unlike hedonic states, affective desires have conditions of fulfillment: they are fulfilled if and only if their

\(^{44}\) The idea of affective desire is formulated by Vadas (1984) and has recently been taken up explicitly by Heathwood (2019), and implicitly by Bruckner (2016) and Lin (2016a).
object obtains, and so do not contribute to well-being independently of the obtaining of their object. I now offer further exposition and defense of these claims and show how they are supported by the conception of the nature of well-being that I have offered.

Different philosophers use the term *desire* to pick out different phenomena. The plausibility of any theory of well-being that invokes desire is therefore inseparable from the question of what it takes desire to be. Only once a theory has specified what it picks out with the term *desire* can we ask how that phenomenon helps us to elucidate the idea of well-being. The question of primary concern for my purposes is therefore not: *What are desires?* Because philosophers use the term *desire* in various, incompatible ways, there may well be no univocal answer to this question. We must instead ask: *What is the conception of desire that figures in the most plausible version of the claim that desires are relevant to well-being?*

Two broad conceptions of desire dominate the contemporary philosophical landscape: a *motivational* conception prominently defended by Hume and an *evaluative* conception with roots in Aristotle (Lauria and Deonna 2017, 2). On the motivational conception, the nature of desire resides in its status as “the spring of action”: desires incline us to action, and so explain our behavior (Lauria and Deonna 2017, 2). This is motivation in a causal sense, one that makes no essential reference to conscious experience. The motivational conception is in this respect impoverished. According to the rival evaluative conception, the motivational conception leaves out the way in which *goodness* figures in desire. It fails to vindicate the plausible claim that “to desire something is to evaluate it in a positive light” (Lauria and Deonna 2017, 2). The evaluative conception views this as an essential feature of desire.
Human beings plausibly have something like desires as proponents of the motivational conception would have us understand them. We also plausibly have something like desires as proponents of the evaluative conception would have us understand them. So the question is which conception (if either) provides a plausible way of accounting for desire’s contribution to well-being. Recent work on the role of desire in well-being supports a view akin to the evaluative conception, though with certain caveats. I will now briefly describe some of this work and how its proponents take it to deal with alleged counterexamples to desire-based accounts of well-being. This will also provide us with strong reason to reject the motivational conception as a suitable account of the desires relevant to well-being.

2. The Affective Conception of Desire

Lin (2016a, 4) proposes the following desire-based principle about well-being: “a desire is welfare-relevant if and only if something about its object attracts, or appeals to, its subject.” Terming this the attraction view, Lin adds that this view makes an explanatory claim in addition to an enumerative one: “what makes some desires relevant to our welfare is just the fact that their objects attract us” (Lin 2016a, 4-5, my emphasis). Similarly, Heathwood (2019, 673) argues that desire in this sense, one “connected with notions like enthusiasm, appeal, interest, excitement, and attraction,” is the kind of desire relevant to well-being. Heathwood formulates this genuine-attraction conception of desire as follows:
If a person has a genuine-attraction desire for some event to occur (or to have occurred or to be occurring), the person finds the occurrence of the event attractive or appealing, is enthusiastic about it (at least to some extent), and tends to view it with pleasure or gusto (Heathwood 2019, 674).

Furthermore, the strength of a given desire on this conception corresponds to the strength of the subject’s attraction to the object of her desire (Heathwood 2019, 675).

Following Vadas (1984), Heathwood calls desires of this sort affective desires. Vadas understands an affect to be “a feeling, emotion, or mood” (Vadas 1984, 276). This is a useful definition, but it does not quite get to the bottom of things. For we can ask what feelings, emotions, and moods in have in common such that they all count as affective. I propose my conception, explained in the previous chapters: to be affective is to be an experience in which something presents positively or negatively, such that the mental state-type of which the experience is a token can only be adequately characterized in irreducibly evaluative terms. This captures the key feature of affective desire as Heathwood and Vadas understand it. Desires of the sort they have in mind involve the experience of an intentional object as appealing or attractive. For the intentional object to present in this way is for it to present in a way characterizable only in irreducibly evaluative terms: as good in a distinctively perspectival way. And this supplies us with a plausible characterization of the sense in which the goodness is for the subject: being grounded in the subject’s own experience, it is for her in my presentational sense of for. But here, unlike in the case of pleasure, it is not the experience itself that is good for the subject. What here presents as good is the intentional object of the state, not features of the state itself.  

While it ultimately does not matter for my purposes how we categorize this view, it is worth noting that it departs from prominent evaluative theories of desire in the following way: on this conception, desire is not

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Here it is important to note that *finding attractive* (or *appealing*) is not itself an attitude. On my view, a person counts as finding something attractive in virtue of having an affective experience in which something *presents* in these ways. That affective experience itself may be non-attitudinal, as in the case of pleasure, or attitudinal, as in the case of affective desire. When the affective experience is intentional, this is in virtue of the experience having an intentional object that presents attractively. Relatedly, this means that *finding attractive* does not itself have satisfaction conditions. It is instead the feature of affective desire in virtue of which the *desire* has satisfaction conditions. When an experience presents a possible state of affairs attractively, the actualization of that state of affairs (if it occurs) is thereby good for the individual to whom it so presents. Finding attractive does not *itself* have satisfaction conditions, because it is not itself an attitude. The attitude, affective desire, is the presentation of a possible state of affairs as appealing, attractive, or favorable. The positive affect is an essential component of the attitude, but the attitude is the *combination* of positive affect and intentional object.\(^{46}\)

With that in hand, we can follow Heathwood in applying the idea of affective desire to certain problem cases for desire-based accounts of well-being. One kind of potential counterexample to desire-based theories of well-being is what Heathwood joins Adams (1999, 87-88) in calling *idealistic* desires. Heathwood provides the following case:

*Pig Slice*: You and your good friend are down to the last slice of pizza, and are both secretly dying for it. In the face of how much you want the pig slice, you manage a white lie: “I couldn’t eat another thing; you take the last slice.” Your craving for the pig slice lasts throughout the evening, but still you wouldn’t change your choice if you could—you continue to

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\(^{46}\) I thank Gwen Bradford for raising these issues to me.
prefer that your friend got the pig slice—since you regard it as the right and selfless thing to do (Heathwood 2019, 666).

According to the motivational conception of desire, it seems that you got what you most desired in this case. Your motivation to give up the slice outweighed your motivation to take it for yourself, as evidenced by your in fact doing the latter. But it is incorrect to say that this was better for you than having the slice yourself would have been. This is, as Heathwood claims, a case in which you act in your friend’s interests at the expense of your own. The motivational conception cannot accommodate this idea.

The affective conception of desire, however, does accommodate it. As Heathwood puts it, “What really appealed to you, or what you were genuinely attracted to, was having the slice yourself” (Heathwood 2019, 677). Since you did not get to have it, you missed out on the positive contribution that having it would have made to your well-being. Furthermore, the affective conception also gets the intuitively correct result when we make the case more realistic by including factors such as the genuine appeal that your friend’s well-being has for you, as well as the shame or guilt that you avoid by not taking the slice. If these factors are stipulated to be sufficiently strong, it becomes plausible that giving away the slice is in your best interests, a result that the affective conception secures (Heathwood 2019, 677-678).

Heathwood also considers two cases of compulsive desire: Parfit (1984, 496)’s harmless addiction and Quinn (1993, 32)’s Radioman. In Parfit’s case, you have a powerful desire each day to take a drug that yields no pleasure, but which also has no side effects so long as you stick to your daily regimen. Fortunately, you have an unlimited supply, so your desire is satisfied each day. In Quinn’s case, Radioman has a powerful
compulsion to turn on any and all radios in his vicinity, and we can suppose that he always succeeds in doing so.

Neither of these cases seem like ones in which the relevant individuals benefit from satisfying their desires. A desire-based theory of well-being that affirms the motivational conception of desire cannot easily make sense of this, but one that affirms the affective conception can (Heathwood 2019, 678-679). Radioman’s desires are rather explicitly stated to be merely behavioral, so their satisfaction does not count on the affective conception. Turning on radios is not appealing or attractive to Radio Man in the way required for him to desire it, according to the attraction conception. Heathwood also takes the desires of Parfit’s addict to be merely behavioral, so their satisfaction does not count either. However, if we stipulate that the addict’s desires are affective, such that taking the harmless drug has genuine appeal, then it becomes plausible that taking it is good for the individual (Heathwood 2019, 679). The same goes for Radioman if we stipulate that he is genuinely attracted to turning on radios (Lin 2016a, 2).

Consider also the fact that the motivational conception would, while the attraction conception would not, attribute desires to entities that are not plausible subjects of well-being. It strains credulity to think that things go well for IBM’s Deep Blue chess computer when it wins a chess match, but it plausibly desires to do so in the behavioral sense of desire (Heathwood 2019, 680-682). Of course, if we were somehow to become convinced that, in their efforts to best Kasparov, the IBM team had inadvertently created an artificial subjectivity with bona fide affective desires, we would likely revise our judgment. The same goes for a Roomba vacuum cleaner, which according to the behavioral conception might be said to desire to traverse your living room (Siewert,
unpublished [a]). It is highly implausible that the fulfillment of such desires benefits the Roomba.

In all of these case-types, the affective conception of desire gives plausible verdicts. The motivational conception gets things wrong. I conclude with Heathwood that the affective conception provides, while the motivational conception does not, an understanding of desire well-suited to theorizing about well-being.

3. Non-Hedonic Affect

You might yet be skeptical of the idea of non-hedonic affect of the kind that I and others claim affective desire involves. In this section, I argue that we can understand affective desire-satisfactions and the way in which they plausibly contribute to well-being without appealing to hedonic experience. In order to make clear what I take this to involve, compare a life lacking distinctively hedonic affect in particular with a life lacking all affect whatsoever.

Crisp (2006) motivates hedonism about well-being with a thought experiment that he calls the anhedonic life—a life completely devoid of pleasure or pain. First, imagine an individual named, P, who “writes a great novel, is courageous, kind, intelligent, witty, and loving, and makes significant scientific discoveries” all while enjoying these pursuits and ways of being (Crisp 2006, 118). Plainly, P’s life goes extremely well for her. But imagine another individual, R:

R’s life is as far as is possible like P’s, with all the enjoyment—and the suffering—stripped out. So R writes a great novel, but finds no enjoyment in what she is doing or in what she achieves. She is not especially gloomy or depressed, and is motivated by the thought that accomplishment will advance her own well-being and that she has a moral duty to use her talents (Crisp 2006, 122).
With these contrast cases in view, Crisp asks:

Is it plausible to think that R’s life is of any value for her? We might well think that R’s accomplishment is admirable, as part of a good human life. Or we might think it makes her life more meaningful in some sense. But is it plausible to think that it could make her life better for her if she herself does not enjoy what she does or reflection on it, and in that sense does not care about these things? (Crisp 2006, 122)

Crisp thinks not. He thinks instead that R’s anhedonic life, while perhaps valuable in some ways, is not at all valuable for her. But the plausibility of this claim depends, in part, on whether we can make sense of the idea of a life that is anhedonic without being utterly anaffective. When asked to imagine a life without pleasure and pain, we may fall into imagining instead a life lacking all affect: lacking all token experiences whose mental-state type is such that what it is like to be in those states can only be characterized in irreducibly evaluative terms. But this would be a mistake. With the conception of pleasure and pain from the previous chapter in hand, we can get a grip on what a merely anhedonic life would involve by comparing it with a completely anaffective life.

Crisp tells us that there is a sense in which R “does not care” about the events of her life, but this understanding of care is narrow and implausible: “she does not enjoy what she does or reflection on it” (Crisp 2006, 122). Care is here defined hedonically, in terms of enjoyment. By definition, an anhedonic subject cannot care about anything in this way. But what about in other ways that individuals characteristically care about things, in the broader sense of regarding them positively? Crisp’s example is silent on this topic.

In order to see whether the presence of such positive regard matters, we can compare an anhedonic subject to an anaffective subject. Are there any plausible
differences in how well-off they are? Let $R^*$ be a merely anhedonic subject and $S$ be a wholly anaffective subject:

$R^*$: $R^*$’s life is maximally like $R$’s, but with the following clarifications. When $R^*$ considers the future, she finds deeply appealing the prospects of writing another novel, continuing her program of scientific research, and continuing her personal relationships with others. When $R^*$ considers the kind of person that she is, she views herself extremely favorably—as living up to her personal ideals. And when $R^*$ reflects on her past, she finds that she looks positively on nearly all of the things that she has done and created.

$S$: S’s life is maximally like $R$’s, but with the following clarifications. When $S$ thinks about the future, she doesn’t find anything appealing. She is completely indifferent to writing another novel, continuing her program of scientific research, and maintaining her personal relationships. When $S$ considers the kind of person that she is, she views herself neither favorably nor unfavorably, but finds that she simply doesn’t care at all. And when $S$ reflects on her past, she finds that she doesn’t look positively or negatively on anything that she has done and created, but simply has no personal take on the matter.

Due to their shared anhedonia, neither $R^*$ nor $S$ finds anything hedonically rewarding. But the merely anhedonic $R^*$ still finds plenty subjectively worthwhile, while the anaffective $S$ experiences nothing in this way. Furthermore, $R^*$’s sense of some things being subjectively worthwhile is not exclusively prospective. It is sometimes concurrent as well (e.g. her favorable view of herself), and sometimes retrospective (e.g. her positive take on what she has done and created in the past).\(^{47}\)

It is important here to distinguish clearly between finding something subjectively worthwhile in an affective manner from taking pleasure in thinking about it or imagining its existence.\(^{48}\) When I have a favorable affective attitude (such as affective desire)

\(^{47}\) Even if some pro-attitudes are essentially prospective (a claim often made about desire), it seems clear that not all are. We often regard past and present states of affairs favorably, and the question of how to characterize such positive regard (e.g. as desires or as some other attitude) seems “more verbal than ontological” (Heathwood 2007, 33).

\(^{48}\) I thank George Sher for making this point to me.
toward an object, what appears favorably is that very object itself as the intentional object of the attitude, the possible state of affairs that it picks out. For example, when I affectively desire my being the 46th President of the United States, what appears favorably to me is the possible state of affairs consisting in my being the 46th POTUS. When I take pleasure in thinking about or imagining this same object, my being the 46th POTUS, the object also appears in experience. But what appears favorably to me in that experience are the features of the experience representing the object. Of course, we often concurrently both affectively desire some object and take pleasure in thinking about or imagining that object. The case described, however, shows how the two can come apart as a matter of psychological fact. I do not affectively desire to be the 46th POTUS because of its unobtainability, which precludes me as a matter of psychological fact from forming any such desire. For I know my serving as the 46th POTUS to be incompatible with a combination of facts about my age, facts about the constitutional criteria for serving as POTUS, and facts about the latest possible date that the 46th POTUS will be inaugurated (to say nothing of the difficulty involved in climbing the political ladder in the way required to mount a presidential campaign). Nonetheless, when I think about or imagine the existence of this state of affairs (complete with my having gone into politics instead of philosophy, and having been born in 1988 instead of 1989), I do experience pleasure as part of this whimsical exercise. Yet I do not affectively desire that things had been different in these ways such that I will be the 46th POTUS. The hypothetical is too far-fetched to solicit even a very weak affective desire on my part.

Distinguishing between hedonic states and non-hedonic-yet-affective states allows us to see the following. Nothing about anhedonia prevents R* from deeply
wanting some state of affairs to come about rather than others. Nor does R*’s anhedonia prevent her from having deeply-held (and indeed, deeply-felt) ideals and aspirations, insofar as these can be understood in terms of affective desire. What anhedonia does prevent is R*’s responding to the fulfillment of her desires via positive hedonic experience (and to their frustration via negative hedonic experience). It does not prevent her from having these attitudes, nor prevent their conditions of fulfillment from being met (or not met). These things are true only of our hypothetical anaffective subject S, to whom nothing is at all engaging, appealing, or attractive—one for whom nothing at all resonates in the Railtonian sense discussed in the previous chapters.

Now we can ask: is it really plausible that R*’s life cannot go better or worse for her depending on how we vary her attitude-fulfillments? Imagine that we held the example fixed regarding her attitudes while taking away the things that fulfill them—her completing another novel, her continuing to research, and her personal relationships. Would not this be worse for her than if she did obtain these things? It seems so. And if so, things can go better or worse for her according to the standards fixed by her own attitudes, even in the absence of any pleasure resulting from the fulfillment of those attitudes.

4. Some Worries

But perhaps these contrast cases have not yet convinced you. If not, we can make the issue more pressing. Imagine that you faced the choice between an anhedonic life and an anaffective life. You require life-saving neurosurgery, and there are two methods of accomplishing it. Method A will leave you permanently anhedonic but not anaffective.
Method B will leave you permanently anaffective. Your neurosurgeon asks you which method you prefer. Are you indifferent between the two?\footnote{See Siewert (1998, 328) for a similarly structured thought experiment regarding a “pheno-ectomy” that permanently prevents a subject from having any phenomenally conscious experiences.}

I opt for Method A. And I would do so even if it were more expensive or carried greater risk. Method A still leaves me with a life painted in the colors of my sentiments, though with a diminished palette. It is a deprived life relative to what I had before, but it is not deprived of everything. By contrast, where my personal good is concerned, life after Method B does strike me as wholly deprived. I would in that case be a being to whom nothing would or could matter.

Now one might point out that despite this deprivation, Method B still seems preferable to death. I too am tempted to regard the anaffective life as potentially better than death, but not for me. Perhaps it would not amount to the death of me as a person, but it would mean the death of my personal good. I therefore view the anaffective life as better than death only in this respect: I might as an anaffective subject still be of some benefit to others if I could be brought to engage in the right behaviors. While nothing I then did would matter to me, it might matter to someone else, and that does matter to me now.\footnote{George Sher (in conversation) says the following of Siewert’s pheno-ectomy thought experiment. It seems that I could, post-operation, still fulfill the constitutive conditions of some attitudes that I held pre-operation. I might for example finish the paper whose completion I deeply valued back when I was still capable of this attitude, or I might promote the interests of those for whom I had interpersonal concern. On some views of when attitude-fulfillments benefit their subject, this would still contribute to my well-being. So becoming anaffective might not, strictly speaking, mean the end of my personal good. It would instead mean the end of the fixing of any new conditions the meeting of which benefits or harms me. And in this important respect, becoming anaffective seems still to be as bad as personal death where my well-being is concerned. See also Siewert (unpublished [a]).}

You might worry about this thought experiment that it is too difficult to imagine your future as an anhedonic but anaffective subject. You might find it difficult to imagine
yourself engaging in the same sorts of activities and making the same sorts of choices that you would have made in equivalent circumstances given your typical psychology. We can overcome these difficulties by running a similar thought experiment retrospectively, from the point of view of the conclusion of your life. Imagine that some god or demon appears to you this very moment, announcing that your life has ended and offering you a choice:

**Retrospective Anhedonia:** All of the hedonic experiences that you had will be erased from history and be replaced by otherwise identical hedonically neutral ones, while leaving the rest of history just the same (including your actions).

**Retrospective Anaffectivia:** All of the affective experiences (both hedonic and non-hedonic) that you had will be erased from history and be replaced by otherwise identical hedonically neutral ones, while leaving the rest of history just the same (including your actions).

From this hypothetical vantage point, with the whole of one’s life so far in view as a temporal succession of moments, it is easier to imagine the erasure of certain aspects of experience while leaving everything else about the course of one’s life intact. In considering this case, I find in myself an even clearer preference for mere anhedonia over total anaffectivia. Mere anhedonia would involve the erasure of less of what strikes me as clearly having mattered in my life. It strikes me as robbing my life of many things that had value for me where my personal good is concerned, but not all such things. Total anaffectivia, by contrast, strikes me as robbing my life of all of its value for me (though, one hopes, not all of the value it has had for others).

Someone might at this stage still have the sense that it could be rational for an anaffective individual to judge some of her experiences good for her.\(^51\) I do not share this sense of the matter, but to those who do I offer the following reason to accept this

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\(^51\) I thank Charles Siewert for raising this worry to me.
implication of my theory nonetheless. The rationality (or at any rate the truth) of the kind of judgment described seems to me to be ruled out by the Railtonian resonance requirement. The experiences of an anaffective subject are, by hypothesis, ones that hold no appeal for her. Such an individual lacks the kind of evaluative outlook that would be required for her experiences to resonate with her in the way required to fulfill the requirement. In order to say that such an individual nonetheless benefits from such experiences, we would therefore need to offer an objectivist explanation of why this is true, one that violates the resonance requirement. While this is a coherent strategy, employing it to save intuitive appearances in this case seems to me too high a theoretical price to pay. Such a strategy cuts itself off from the distinctive explanatory resources of subjectivity that I described in Chapter 1, prohibiting us from explaining the goodness of what is good for a subject in terms of her own valuations. Wide reflective equilibrium almost inevitably requires that we give up some intuitive judgments on the grounds that they cannot be squared with broader theoretical principles that we have even stronger reason to accept.

But someone might yet have a different kind of reservation about the cases I have described. One might worry that R*'s lack of a hedonic response to the fulfillments of her attitudes tells against these fulfillments being good for her. Insofar as R* is aware of her attitude-fulfillments, they may seem to be Dead Sea Apples, the term Sidgwick (1907, 110) uses for objects of desire that lose their luster once attained. The best explanation of why we are led to question whether R*'s attitude-fulfillments benefit her, I maintain, is that these episode of fulfillment-plus-awareness seem like Dead Sea Apples cases. But are they?
One way of understanding Dead Sea Apples cases is as involving i) getting just what one wants, and ii) what one wants turning out to be a disappointment (Heathwood 2007, 30). On this understanding of Dead Sea Apples cases, they are characterized by a lack of hedonic response to getting what one wants, even with full knowledge that one has in fact gotten it. Since this sounds just like R*, it appears to spell trouble for my view. However, this is not the only way to understand what is going on in Dead Sea Apples cases, and neither is it the most plausible.

The key feature of Dead Sea Apple cases is that they involve upset expectations. On the way of understanding these cases that I have just described, one desires that p and p turns out to be different than one expected. Because our expectations so often diverge from reality, this understanding makes trouble for accounts of well-being that appeal to desire and other pro-attitudes. If one can desire p while expecting p to be far different than it turns out to be, a great many desires with diverse kinds of objects will turn out to be intuitively irrelevant to well-being, and the same will be so for similarly-structured episodes of valuing, caring, and so on.

But there is a second way of understanding Dead Sea Apples cases that does not create this problem for attitude-based accounts of well-being. This involves being more demanding in our understanding of really getting what one wants. Imagine that you are a car lover and get what seems to be a great bargain on a used car. On the test drive, it provides a smooth ride with responsive steering and brakes. As a car lover, you desire for its own sake a car that performs in this way. On the way home after your purchase, however, things change. The ride is bumpy due to a jerky transmission, and the steering and brakes become sluggish. You think to yourself, “This isn’t what I wanted!” On the
second interpretation of what is going on in Dead Sea Apples cases, this internal exclamation is literally true. You did not get what you wanted. You got a car that is jerky and sluggish when you wanted a car that was smooth and responsive. A conception of desire-fulfillment that counts instances like this one is too permissive. When what you desire turns out to be different than you expected it to be, it is implausible that you in fact desired it in the first place. In cases like these, the possible state of affairs that your desire represented or referred to is not the one that in fact obtains.52

Lauinger (2011, 327-329) considers but rejects this way of understanding Dead Sea Apples cases. His rejection hinges, however, on a pragmatic need to form course-grained desires that do not take into account every detail of the state of affairs desired. But it is not obvious how pragmatic considerations that shape the origins of desire bear on subsequent evaluative assessment of whether someone has really gotten what she wanted. Inquiry into the psychological mechanisms that shape our desires is surely a worthwhile enterprise, but it does not obviously bear (in any direct way) on the question of which of the resultant desires to count as contributing to well-being.

How does all of this help us to understand R*? In the case of typical adult human beings, recognition of one’s attitude-fulfillments reliably results in a positive hedonic response. So when we consider R*, her lack of any positive hedonic response quite naturally leads us to doubt that she really has gotten what she wanted. This doubt however, rests on an assumption that hold for typical human adults, but not for her. When typical human adults undergo no positive hedonic response to getting (and recognizing that they have gotten) what they “wanted,” we are justified in concluding that they did

52 Heathwood (2007, 31) offers a similar solution but limits it to desires for sensations because his concern is to develop a desire-based theory of pleasure.
not really get what they wanted after all. But R* is atypical in precisely the respect that usually warrants this inference: in her atypical psychology, no reliable connection obtains between her attitude-fulfillments and her hedonic response, for she has no hedonic responses. The inference from her lack of hedonic response to the claim that her attitude-fulfillments do not benefit her is therefore unjustified. And this provides an answer to skeptical doubts about whether R*’s getting what she wants benefits her.

Once we see this, we are in a position to see that R*’s attitude-fulfillments considered in themselves (rather than in relation to hedonic experience) are just like ours. Her desires involve her regarding some state of affairs positively in just the way that we do. If that very state of affairs comes to obtain, R* has gotten what she wanted in just the way that we can be said to get what we want. And if this is all that we say, without raising further questions about whether R* is aware that she has gotten what she wanted and whether she experiences a hedonic response to this awareness, we must count her just as fortunate as we count a typical human adult in these circumstances. And we should, it seems to me, count typical human adults as fortunate in such circumstances—though not, of course, as fortunate as they would be if they also experienced pleasure as a result of their awareness of their getting what they want.

This verdict can also be supported by reflecting on a different kind of case. Consider fortunate Kelvin and his less fortunate counterpart Melvin:

**Kelvin:** Kelvin finally fulfills his affective desire to climb K2, the second-highest mountain in the world. Upon realizing that he has reached the summit, Kelvin experiences great joy as he revels in his success.

**Melvin:** Melvin finally fulfills his affective desire to climb K2, the second-highest mountain in the world. Tragically, he collapses and dies the instant he reaches the summit, before he becomes aware that he has succeeded.
Clearly, things go wonderfully for Kelvin in this example. Things do not go so well for Melvin. But is there *nothing* good for Melvin in the case, no positive contribution whatsoever to his well-being? To claim that Melvin is deprived of the good of fulfilling his desire because he is deprived of resultant joy, it seems, attributes to him one deprivation too many.\(^{53}\) For compare Melvin to a phenomenal zombie counterpart, Zevlin, who has apparently just the same life but in fact lacks all phenomenal experience, including all affect.\(^{54}\) Melvin’s life seems obviously preferable to Zevlin’s: the latter is plausibly incapable of *any* contributions to well-being.

One might point out that had Melvin not collapsed, he would have experienced the joy that Kelvin does.\(^{55}\) But it is doubtful that *merely counterfactual* pleasure can bear such theoretical weight as to be what explains the goodness of Melvin’s attitude-fulfillment for him. The contribution that fulfilling his life-long ambition makes to Kelvin’s well-being is adequately explained by the fact of its *being his life-long ambition*, something he wanted deeply and consistently, without invoking the contingent connection it bears to potential hedonic experience. This feature of Kelvin’s story is present, without diminution, in Melvin’s.

Some reject the idea that attitude-fulfillments can benefit an individual when she is not *aware* of the relevant fulfillment. This position may seem all the more enticing if we maintain that an individual’s well-being is dependent upon her perspective. For how could anything stand in the appropriate relation of dependence upon an individual’s

\(^{53}\)This point is loosely inspired by Bernard Williams (1981, 18), who in a difference context famously deploys the phrase “one thought too many”.

\(^{54}\)I thank Charles Siewert for suggesting this example and the name.

\(^{55}\)Siewert (unpublished [a]) suggests this kind of counterfactual explanation of the goodness of attitude-fulfillments that are unknown to their subjects due to incapacity.
perspective without her being aware of it? These are tempting thoughts, but they become unconvincing once we consider more cases. Nagel (1970, 76), for example, imagines a person “betrayed by his friends, ridiculed behind his back, and despised by people who treat him politely to his face.” It strains credulity to think that this man would be no better off if he actually had what he merely believes himself to have: true friends and genuine respect. Of course, this man is still better off than he would be if he knew the truth, for then he would suffer as well. Ignorance is indeed sometimes bliss, but the case suggests that there is more to well-being be than bliss alone.

Consider also the converse case in which someone strongly wants the respect, admiration, and love of others but believes that she utterly lacks it, when in reality she does have it. Here, ignorance results in misery. But notice that despite her misery, this individual does plausibly possess important goods. Perhaps these do not fully countervail her misery, but surely they mitigate it. Compared to an equally miserable counterpart who really does lack what she deeply desires, this person is better off. And notice that we can say all of this without going beyond the individual’s own perspective, since an individual’s perspective includes her affective attitudes in addition to her beliefs. There is no compelling reason to take on so restrictive a conception of an individual’s perspective as to restrict it to belief and occurrent experience, and reflection on cases cuts strongly against such a conception.

Furthermore, in rejecting the possibility of contributions to well-being independent of awareness, we risk falling prey to Nozickean experience machine worries all over again. In order to avoid this result, the proponent of an awareness requirement must affirm a conjunctive view according to which contributions to well-being require:
i) an actual, rather than merely apparent, attitude-fulfillment

ii) pleasurable awareness that the attitude has been fulfilled

On inspection, this combination of requirements appears *ad hoc*. Why insist upon a front-end attitude requirement *and* a back-end experience requirement? The idea must be that neither is sufficient in isolation. But then how is that these two components, neither of which contributes anything on its own, jointly yield contributions to well-being? Attitude-fulfillments are plausible contributors to well-being because they involve the subject’s endorsement. If this is the right rationale for their inclusion in an account of well-being, then why require subjective endorsement *twice*—on both the front end *and* the back end—as the proposed combination of requirements does?

Similarly, pleasures are plausible contributors to well-being because they constitute a special form of value-involving experience. If this is the right rationale for their inclusion in an account of well-being, why include the further requirement that they be responsive to a *particular kind of event* in order to contribute? And why require that the particular kind of event in question involve another special form of value-laden experience (desire)? In requiring both attitude-fulfillment and positive hedonic response, the proposed set of requirements either cuts itself off from appeal to the rationales that make these things intuitively relevant to well-being in the first place, or it requires that the rationales apply *doubly* when once should be enough if the rationales are any good in the first place.  

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56 Incidentally, this same style of objection makes trouble for so-called *hybrid* objectivist-subjectivist views of well-being that require both an objective good and positive subjective response to the presence of that good in one’s life (for an overview of such theories, see Woodard 2016). If neither one counts for anything on its own, what good is combining them?
An opponent of my analysis might appeal instead to the alleged embarrassment of its implying the possibility of *posthumous* attitude-fulfillment, and so posthumous contributions to well-being. This, however, is a conceptually separable issue. The puzzle of posthumous contributions to well-being concerns how there can be such a contribution in the absence of a subject to *receive* the contribution. That issue will turn on whether we can make sense of such contributions outside the temporal boundaries of a subject’s life. But this complicating factor is not present in the case of unrecognized desire-fulfillments *during* a subject’s life.

Lastly, someone might offer a worry from the other direction: that my account does not cover *enough* plausible cases of benefits and harms of which an individual is not aware. Imagine that, while I am under anesthesia, my surgical team dresses me up in an absurd costume and holds a party, serving drinks and mocking me while taking pictures.\(^57\) Intuitively, this counts as harming me, even if I never become aware of what took place. But it is implausible that I ever had an experienced aversion to this highly specific situation. How then are we to explain its status as a harm on my theory? This question turns on the issue of how fine-grainedly to individuate desires, an issue on which I am not committed to any particular account. Because my theory does not generate specific commitments about this issue, I am content to allow cases like these to shape its answer. The case suggests that we should understand more general desires and aversions, such as my more general aversion to public humiliation, to count as realized even in highly specific conditions I have never consciously considered. This result strikes me as antecedently plausible, so I happily accept it.

\(^{57}\) I thank Charles Siewert for suggesting this example.
Having extracted the lesson of my contrast cases of R* and S, my defense of the claim that affective desire-satisfactions contribute to well-being is nearly complete. To fully complete it, I need to accomplish two more tasks: i) show that some remaining rival views are untenable, and ii) show that affective desire-satisfactions have the right structure to be intrinsically valuable for their subjects.\(^{58}\) Even if you are not wholly convinced by the positive arguments that I have just offered, the combination of the antecedent plausibility of the relevance of desire, and the failure of competing conceptions of desire to make sense of this fact, leaves my view on strong footing.\(^{59}\)

### 5. Against Cognitivist Conceptions

The affective conception of desire is a non-cognitivist conception in that it does not take desires to be apt for truth or falsity. To be engaged by or attracted to the object of one’s desires is not to assert anything or epistemically commit to something’s being the case.

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58 While (ii) is not strictly necessary to establish my theory, it is an additional strength of the theory that it suggests a plausible, unified account of the sense in which value for an individual can be intrinsic that applies across the various goods it proposes.

59 One might worry that my analysis in the section is complicated by the following: that there are affective states that are neither positive nor negative: jealously, agitation, nervousness, boredom, ennui, surprise, awe, and anticipation. It seems to me that the first five (jealously, agitation, nervousness, boredom, and ennui) are in fact most naturally construed negative affective states, because what these states are like cannot be adequately characterized except by appeal to negative, irreducibly evaluative language. In particular, it seems to me that none of these five states can be characterized except in terms of something like discontent. If we instead stipulate some “value-free” definition of some or all of these states, then they are not affective in my sense of the term, but neither do I then find it plausible that they directly contribute to an individual’s level of well-being.

Surprise and anticipation seem to me “value-free” in the sense that they are not essentially value-involving. In the case of surprise, much depends on what one is surprised by: e.g., is it a pleasant surprise, or an unpleasant one? In the case of anticipation, much depends on what one is anticipating, and how what is anticipated presents to one: e.g., is what I anticipate something that I welcome, or something that I dread?

Awe is perhaps the most interesting case, since it is often taken to involve both wonder and fear. If that is so, then awe is a combination of both positive and negative affect. If instead it is possible to feel awe without fear, instead feeling only something like wonder, then awe in those cases will involve only positive affect.

The main takeaway for my purposes is that I am happy to look to my underlying conception of well-being for guidance about what to think about difficult cases like these, and accept the verdicts that my theory gives about them once they have been appropriately specified. I thank Gwen Bradford for raising these examples to me.
Though I have said that desire involves the positive presentation of an intentional object, this does not imply the attribution of objective value properties. Cognitivist versions of the evaluative conception, by contrast, do make claims like these. They identify desire with mental states that are apt for truth and falsity, such as judgments, beliefs, or perceptual states (Schroeder 2017a, §1.3). These theories of desire are not subject to the same sorts of objections as motivational theories. They are constructed precisely to avoid such objections by specifying what motivational theories leave out. But their appeal to truth-apt attitudes leads to other problems. Most crucially, they make it difficult to see how an individual can desire something in itself in the way that attitudinal theories of well-being require.

Consider Scanlon (1998)’s version of cognitivism. The particular cognitive attitude with which Scanlon identifies desires is standardly taken to be judgments about one’s reasons for action (Schroeder 2017b, 222). After distinguishing between broad (merely motivational) desire and narrow desire (Scanlon 1998, 37), Scanlon identifies narrow desire with desire in the directed-attention sense:

A person has a desire in the directed-attention sense that P if the thought of P keeps occurring to him or her in a favorable light, that is to say, if the person’s attention is directed insistently toward considerations that present themselves counting in favor of P (Scanlon 1998, 39).

Scanlon further spells out his conception of desire using terms like “appeal” and “affection” (Scanlon 1998, 42). In this respect, his conception has important affinities with those of Lin and Heathwood, who agree that desiring p is characterized by p’s occurring to one “in a favorable light.” The key point of disagreement here concerns just how to interpret the idea of occurring to one in a favorable light. On Scanlon’s view, this

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60 See Siewert (unpublished [b]) for an analogous view of property attribution in vision.
is to be understood in terms of one’s attention being turned toward apparent reasons in favor of p. It is on this basis that Scanlon maintains that “desires almost never provide reasons for action in the way described by the standard desire model” (Scanlon 1998, 43). This seems to be because, on Scanlon’s view, desires do not generate reasons; they respond to them (or at least, to the appearance of them). It is not the desire that p itself that gives a subject reason to pursue p. Instead, Scanlon thinks, it is the underlying reasons to which the desire is responsive.\(^\text{61}\) Appropriate desiring on this picture involves bringing oneself into conformity with an independent normative order. By contrast, Lin and Heathwood maintain that it is the desire itself that does the normative work, though they do not give a sustained account of how.\(^\text{62}\)

Desires as Scanlon conceives of them are ill-suited to explain well-being, since they at best reveal normativity to us rather than explaining it. Scanlon freely admits this; the point of his conception of desire is to show how normatively impotent desires supposedly are. If Scanlon is right about that, it is bad news for those who think desire-fulfillment relevant to well-being. But this view seems to deny that we desire anything in itself or for its own sake. It seems undeniable that we sometimes desire things for their own sake, rather than for the sake of something else. But if what it is to desire p is to have one’s attention captured by apparent considerations in favor of p, p is thereby desired on the basis of these apparent underlying considerations, and not in itself, as an independent

\(^{61}\) The relevant reasons here must of course be bona fide reasons, rather than merely apparent ones.

\(^{62}\) Strictly speaking, Lin’s view is a bit more qualified than this. He maintains that if the desire-satisfactionist theory of well-being is true, then desires themselves are what do the normative work. Lin aims only to work out the best version of the desire-satisfactionist theory, not to adjudicate between the resulting theory and non-desire-satisfactionist competitors. Heathwood’s view is not conditional in this way.
end. Nothing is ever desired just for its own sake, but always for the sake of the apparent reasons favoring it.

To see this more clearly, consider some of Scanlon’s examples of desire in the directed-attention sense, such as desiring to have a new computer (Scanlon 1998, 43-44). Scanlon says, plausibly, that

the reason that I have for buying a computer is not that it will satisfy my desire, but rather that I will enjoy having it, or that it will help me with my work, impress my friends and colleagues, or bring some other supposed benefit (Scanlon 1998, 44).

In this case, Scanlon desires to have a new computer only as a means to securing what is favored by the reasons: enjoyment, greater efficiency in work, impressing others, or some further benefit. This is the result Scanlon is looking for: his desire to have a new computer turns out to have no reason-giving force of its own. In this particular case, the claim seems correct. Only someone with a great interest in or admiration of technology could plausibly desire to own a computer for its own sake.

But Scanlon construes various other examples similarly: the desire to eat ice cream, the desire to engage in sex, and the desire to read philosophy (Scanlon 1998, 44-45). He explains the reason-giving force of each such desire as merely derivative, stemming from the enjoyment that each of these activities would involve. While this sounds plausible enough in the ice cream case, it rings false in the cases of sex and reading philosophy. Many people desire to engage in these activities for more than just the enjoyment that they bring. This is especially plausible if we understand sex as involving emotional union rather than simply sensory pleasure with a particular kind of cause, and reading philosophy as involving intellectual engagement rather than simply enjoyable recognition of a particular kind of visual-cognitive stimulus.
Scanlon’s view can accommodate this much. If we understand these activities as I just described, he can say that these further features are themselves reason-giving. But these further features will then themselves be desired only under the guise of reason-realizers. It will be the mere presence of these further features, rather than an individual’s desiring to engage in activities with these features, that does the normative work. It will need to be the case that these activities involve things beyond enjoyment that people have antecedent reason to obtain, independently of whether they care about these features. On Scanlon’s telling, desire at best involves our recognizing the presence of these features, without contributing to the explanation of why the features have the reason-giving significance they do. But this too rings false. It is more plausible to say that these activities have a particularly powerful appeal for many people, over and above both the enjoyment that they involve and any independent, background reason they take themselves to have to engage in them. Scanlon’s view cannot make sense of desiring something just in itself in this way; we only count as desiring something on his view if some further reason presents itself in our experience as justifying the desire by favoring pursuit of its object. But it is more plausible to say both that we sometimes do have desires of just this kind, and that when we do, such desires give us reasons. When the activities described above appeal to people in the way characteristic of affective desire, this itself gives people reason to engage in them, even if they also take the activities to be favored by reasons of enjoyment and of other kinds.

Consider the case of reading philosophy. This activity is indeed often enjoyable, and that is a reason on my theory as well as on Scanlon’s to engage in it. It also often brings further benefits, such as providing flashes of insight and a greater conceptual
repertoire to deploy in philosophical writing and conversations. But it is not always enjoyable, and it does not always result in insight or a more expansive conceptual repertoire. In my own case, the lack of these further benefits in various instances of reading philosophy does not lead me to conclude that the activity was pointless. Nor do I attribute this lack of pointlessness to there being some other background reason to do it, independently of what I care about. Rather, I did something that deeply appealed to me (and appealed *not* just in virtue of the further features described above). The fact that it appealed to me in this way is reason enough (by my lights, anyway) to have done it. In cases like these, it is true that I had *less* reason to engage in the activity than would have been the case given the presence of these features. But the idea that their absence implies that I had *no* reason at all to engage in the activity, that I was acting without any ground whatsoever for doing so, does not square with my self-understanding.

The root of the problem facing Scanlon’s view generalizes to other cognitivist accounts of desire. The problem faced by all such accounts is that according to them, one (at best) desires an object under some further description (e.g., its being the thing favored by the reasons, its being morally good, or its being generically good). But this falls short of desiring the object for its own sake. Consider Smith’s objection to certain accounts of the connection between moral judgment and moral motivation:

Good people care non-derivatively about honesty, the weal and woe of their children and friends, the well-being of their fellows, people getting what they deserve, justice, equality, and the like, not just one thing: doing what they believe to be right, where this is read *de dicto* and not *de re*. Indeed, commonsense tells us that being so motivated is a fetish or moral vice, not the one and only moral virtue (Smith 1994, 75).

Smith is concerned with the role of desire in moral virtue, rather than its role in well-being. But his discussion is instructive nonetheless. Smith worries is that his opponents’
view implies at best only a connection between moral judgment and merely *derivative* concern for honesty, the well-being of others, justice, equality, and so on. If these opponents’ view were true, the only *non*-derivative concern reliably connected with moral judgment is concern for *doing what is right*. But, the thought goes, this is a perniciously shallow conception of moral virtue. Genuine moral virtue requires non-derivative concern for honesty, the well-being of others, etc., *in themselves*, not merely as particular realizations of moral rightness.

Scanlon’s account of desire implies that desire is derivative in just this way. His account of what desires *are* implies that desire-based positive regard for *p* derives from the apparent reasons in favor of *p*. The resulting desires are thus *de dicto* desires for *the thing favored by the apparent reasons* in a particular episode of desiring. They are not genuinely desires for the thing in itself, for its own sake, considered independently of its falling under this description (or as is often put, presenting in this “guise”). The same is true of cognitivist accounts of desire on which the relevant description or guise is instead *the seemingly good thing* (Stampe 1987; Oddie 2005, ch. 3) or *the thing that apparently ought-to-be* (Lauria 2017). On these views, the significance of any object of desire consist in its seeming to have some further normative property. It is the independent property, rather the object to which it is on these views attributed, that has non-derivative significance. These views cannot make sense of an individual’s desiring anything in a normatively unmediated way, unaided by the apparent presence of some background consideration that *justifies* doing so.

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63 This is no less true of the desire *that I act in accordance with my apparent reasons*. As a Scanlonian desire, this state must involve the occurrence to one of apparent considerations favoring *that*. Unless those reasons are just identical with the existence of the object of desire itself (a rather problematic situation if the reasons are supposed to *justify* bringing about the object), this desire will be derivative, too.
The affective conception of desire favored by Vadas, Lin, Heathwood, and myself is therefore a distinctive position that stands apart not only from the motivational conception, but also from the evaluative conception as typically understood. Considering the affective conception to be a subspecies of the evaluative conception may be misleading. If we define an evaluative state narrowly in terms of its attribution of independent value-properties, then the affective conception is not an evaluative conception of desire. On the affective conception, desire does not attribute value-properties but generates them in the response-dependent way that I have characterized as valuation. If we instead define an evaluative state broadly in terms of its not being adequately characterizable without invoking a certain class of predicates (the one whose members are recognizable to us as evaluative, rather than merely descriptive, predicates), then the affective conception is an evaluative view. But if so, it is a version of the evaluative conception that avoids the objections faced by cognitivist views, and is for that reason preferable to them.

Because of this difference between the affective conception and cognitivist conceptions, we need a way of characterizing the distinctive features of the affective conception. To classify the affective conception as an evaluative view in the broad sense described above is accurate, but it does not distinguish this conception from cognitivist ones. We can instead call the affective conception a conferral conception of desire, where conferral means giving something the value-involving status that it has. Compare, for example, the conferral of official honors, such as peerage titles like knighthood. Though the monarch that confers such titles may well do so for background reasons explaining the act, the holding of a peerage title just consists in its having been conferred by this
monarch, without reference to whatever background reasons may or may not explain the choice to engage in the act of conferral.

6. Attitudinal Pleasure

The final competitor view that I will discuss is not a view of desire, but a view of pleasure. I discuss it now because it claims that pleasure is most fundamentally a propositional attitude in much the same way that desire is standardly taken to be. Because of this, one might think that attitudinal pleasure can do the theoretical work to which I have put affective desire, so I need to answer this potential challenge.

In claiming that both pleasure and the satisfaction of affective desires contribute to well-being, my view avoids experience machine-style worries without giving up on what is most plausible about hedonism. In the previous chapter, I mentioned another view also alleged to have these benefits: Feldman’s attitudinal hedonism. I claimed that, in offering an attitudinal theory of pleasure, Feldman’s view is subject to the same objections that render desire-based theories of pleasure implausible. I take those objections to be decisive against Feldman’s view as well as against desire-based theories of pleasure, but I want now to say about more about his view in order to compare it with my own.

Recall how Feldman characterizes attitudinal pleasure: “A person takes attitudinal pleasure in some state of affairs if he enjoys it, is pleased about it, is glad that it is happening, is delighted by it” (Feldman 2004, 56). In this respect, attitudinal pleasure seems similar to affective desire: it is a propositional attitude that confers goodness on its intentional objects. Feldman takes attitudinal pleasure to be explanatorily prior to sensory
pleasure, claiming that “we can define sensory pleasures as feelings in which the feeler takes intrinsic attitudinal pleasure” (Feldman 2004, 56). So, in comparing Feldman’s view to my own, I will focus on his claims about attitudinal pleasure.

To begin the comparison, consider a variant of one of Feldman’s cases. Suppose that I fall asleep early the night of a presidential election, before the votes are counted. On waking the next day, I have a pro-attitude toward the state of affairs consisting in my favored candidate, Jones, being the president-elect. Since Jones was heavily favored, I believe, on realizing that it is the day after the election, that Jones is now president-elect. Unbeknownst to me, Jones’ opponent, Smith, actually pulled off a long-shot victory. Feldman’s view implies that, if I take attitudinal pleasure in the proposition that Jones is president-elect, I benefit despite the proposition being false. Stipulate that I benefit 1 unit of well-being.

My view construes this case differently, but implies a similar verdict about my degree of benefit. My view says that, if I affectively desire that Jones is president-elect, I do not benefit from this because the proposition is false. If we leave things there, it seems that Feldman’s view generates a different verdict than mine does. But now remember that I also believe Jones to be president-elect. Believing that Jones is president-elect, together with desiring it, is likely to cause me to feel some (non-attitudinal) pleasure. I believe that I have gotten what I desired, and there is a reliable psychological connection between believing that I have gotten what I desired and experiencing pleasure in the apparent recognition of this fact. So my view implies, on a psychologically plausible interpretation

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64 Feldman (2002, 608) a discusses a case involving the candidate themselves, which he draws from Chisholm (1986, 28-29).

65 In the next chapter, I argue that this is also a prudentially rational response.
of this case, that I do benefit. We can explain the 1-unit contribution to my well-being in terms of my feeling some non-attitudinal pleasure.

Now alter the case such that Jones does win. Feldman’s view now implies that, if I take attitudinal pleasure in the proposition that Jones is president-elect, I benefit 10 units (Feldman 2004, 112; Feldman 2007, 442). Feldman’s view implies, plausibly, that I benefit more when the object of my pro-attitude in fact obtains. My view can explain this verdict, too. Since my desire is satisfied, I benefit from that fact. And I also benefit from the experience of pleasure that my belief-desire pair reliably causes. So my view can explain the intuitively greater benefit that I receive in this case just as well as Feldman’s view can.

So it appears that Feldman’s view is extensionally similar to mine: it generates similar verdicts about cases. The clearest way to distinguish my Feldman’s view from my own is therefore to consider what manner of explanation it offers of contributions to well-being. On this score, I will now argue, my view is preferable.

Feldman is committed to the claim that, when an individual has a pro-attitude toward a state of affairs that does not obtain, this can nonetheless benefit the individual. But a fact of this kind is a difficult fact to adequately explain. The thing to which the attitude is directed does not exist, and non-existent things cannot credibly figure in explanations of why an individual benefits. So we might look instead to the attitude itself to explain the benefit. But the most plausible story of how attitudes explain benefits is by conferring goodness upon their objects. Since the object in this case does not exist, it is not clear why a benefit yet exists. Perhaps we could say instead that it is not just the having of the pro-attitude that explains the benefit, but the having of the pro-attitude in
combination with *thinking* that its object obtains. But it is not clear what thinking that the object obtains could add to the explanation here. Thinking that the attitude is fulfilled does not, after all, bring it any closer to *being* fulfilled. Perhaps cases like this sometimes strike us as involving benefit because of the following fact. The individual concerned might be *justified* in believing herself to have benefitted, since she knows that she had a pro-attitude toward a state of affairs and believes that the state of affairs in fact obtains. If we put ourselves fully in *her* shoes, rather than considering her case from the outside, it can then seem plausible that she in fact benefits. But just because she would be justified in thinking herself to have benefitted does not mean that we are. We know to be false what she believes to be true: that her pro-attitude was not in fact fulfilled.

In these cases, it is more plausible to say that the pro-attitude plays no essential role in explaining the benefit. Instead, the having of the pro-attitude simply causes related states that explain the benefit, such as pleasures of anticipation or imagination. My account can explain the cases in this way; Feldman’s account insists, implausibly, that it is the having of the pro-attitude itself that furnishes the explanation.

When an individual has a pro-attitude toward a state of affairs that *does* obtain, these problems do not arise. So, in those cases, Feldman’s attitudinal pleasures seem more plausible as candidates for explaining why a benefit occurs. But in these cases, it is difficult to distinguish attitudinal pleasure from affective desire-satisfaction. The only clear way I can see of distinguishing them is this: Feldman insists that attitudinal pleasures are not *feelings* (Feldman 2004, 63). This leaves it unclear whether they are

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66 I thank Charles Siewert for raising this possibility to me. Heathwood (2006) defends a similar view, but the same worries apply to his view, too.
affective states in my sense: whether they are only characterizable by appeal to irreducibly evaluative terms.

If attitudinal pleasures are only characterizable in this way, then they seem to me equivalent to affective desire, and the terminological issue of what to call this attitude is of little consequence. What is of consequence is that my view would then be equally plausible to Feldman’s when it comes to cases like these, but preferable to his when it comes to understanding sensory pleasures. My account provides a conception of these pleasures that does not take on the implausible consequences of attitude-based conceptions of pleasure, while Feldman’s does. If, on the other hand, attitudinal pleasures are not only characterizable in irreducibly evaluative terms, Feldman’s account lacks a clear solution to Bradford’s Deep Problem, which I discussed in the previous chapter. It lacks a deep explanation of the goodness of these goods, while my account does supply such an explanation. For these reasons, I maintain that, despite the important affinities of Feldman’s views and my own, my view is preferable.

7. The Structure of Affective Desire-Fulfillment

In the previous chapter, I offered an account of the way in which pleasure’s goodness for its subject is intrinsic: a pleasant experience is both bearer and ground of the goodness that it has for the subject of the experience. The case for pleasure’s value being intrinsic in this way is straightforward because it is the very same fact (the fact of someone’s experiencing pleasure) that serves as both bearer and ground of the goodness. This same account of the intrinsicality of goodness for an individual applies to desire-satisfactions.
The applicability of this conception of intrinsicality to desire-satisfactions, however, is less obvious than in the case of pleasure. For it seems that the object of a desire, even when desired for its own sake rather than for the sake of something else, has its value conferred by something else (the desire), and so is only extrinsically valuable (Feldman 1997, 456). In order to assess the plausibility of this claim, we need to distinguish two views about what desire-satisfactions are (Dorsey 2013, 152-153):

**Hobbesian:** A desire-satisfaction consists in the existence of the object of the desire.

**Moorean:** A desire-satisfaction consists in the conjunction of the desire and the existence of its object.

On the Hobbesian model of a desire-satisfaction, its goodness is clearly extrinsic. A desire-satisfaction has its goodness conferred upon it by something external: the corresponding desire. But on the Moorean model, the goodness is plausibly intrinsic. Consider the conjunctive state of affairs $D(p) & p$, where $D(p)$ is the desire and $p$ the object of the desire. On the Moorean view, the desire $D(p)$ is the source of the goodness. The other part of the conjunctive state of affairs, the object $p$, is the bearer of the goodness. The whole that these together constitute is therefore both source and bearer of its goodness.\(^{67}\)

But one might have the following worry about such an understanding of the goodness of desire-fulfillments:

**Objection 1—Gerrymandering:** The goodness is only intrinsic because the conjunctive state of affairs is in some crucial sense gerrymandered to ensure this fact. The state of affairs has its goodness “in itself” only because we have selected the needed components and conjoined them.

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\(^{67}\) Perry (1926, 132-133) anticipates this view.
There is also a second, more serious worry that could in principle persist even if one grants that the state of affairs $D(p)\& p$ is not perniciously pieced together:

**Objection 2—The Fallacy of Composition:** The model commits the fallacy of composition by assuming that we can legitimately say, of the conjunctive state of affairs, that it is both source and bearer of the goodness in virtue of its having a part that is source of the goodness and a part that is bearer of the goodness.

Though the objections are clearly related, not just any reply to the first objection will be adequately responsive to the second. Even if we grant that the conjunction $D(p)\& p$ is not a mere patchwork state of affairs, we still face the question of how the conjunctive state of affairs inherits the value of one of its conjuncts.

They key to responding to the gerrymandering objection is to recognize that the two parts of a desire-satisfaction do not intelligibly count as parts of such a whole without reference to the other part. The state of affairs that $D(p)\& p$ picks out is a relational state of affairs whose parts only are (fully) what they are in virtue of constituting a (possible) whole. This is because the state of affairs $p$ only counts as a satisfier in reference to a satisfaction-condition, which is set by the desire $D(p)$. While the obtaining of the proposition $p$ is independent of the desire $D(p)$, its counting as a satisfier requires the existence of the desire. The existence of the desire gives the state of affairs expressed in $p$ the further, relational property of being a satisfier. And, likewise, a desire $D(p)$ only counts as setting a satisfaction-condition with reference to the possible satisfier, $p$. The desire only counts as having the particular condition of fulfillment that it does because it refers to a particular way that the world could be, and presents that way the world could be favorably.
The sense in which desires and their objects can be said to count as having these statuses needs explication. Consider first the object counting as a satisfier. A state of affairs counts as a satisfier in a way structurally analogous to a plot of land’s counting as property. A state of affairs obtains (or not) independently of its being desired, just as a plot of undeveloped land exists independently of its owner. But when a state of affairs is desired, it thereby takes on the additional, relational property of being a satisfier of the corresponding desire, analogous to a plot of land’s taking on the additional, relational property of being the property of the person who owns it. A state of affairs that is not desired exists, but it does not exist as a satisfier. And it is a state of affair’s being a satisfier, not merely its obtaining, that makes it the case that it constitutes one part of a desire-satisfaction.

This analogy is helpful in elucidating a further property of Moorean desire-satisfactions: the respect in which the whole desire-satisfaction can legitimately be said to inherit the value of one of its parts in virtue of the whole contributing to the explanation of the value of that part. Consider the monetary value of a piece of land that I own as property. Because the land has this monetary value, I myself have this same net monetary worth in my legal role as owner of that land. The monetary value accrues to me in my relational role as owner of the land because the land itself, under the description of property (and importantly, only under this description) has this monetary value. Yet the land’s counting as property in this case is only intelligible in reference to me in my legal role as owner of the land. The whole that I qua legal owner constitute together with the land is what explains why the land has a monetary value—if the land did not have an

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68 In order to avoid complications stemming from the Lockean theory of original property acquisition, suppose that the current owner purchased the land rather than coming to own it by mixing her labor with it. See Locke ([1690] 1980, Ch. V, and Nozick (1974, 174-182).
owner, it could not be sold in a transaction. And my net worth is only intelligible in terms of me *qua* legal owner in relation to the land *qua* property. In the same way, a desire-satisfaction having value for me is only intelligible with reference to me in my role as the desirer. Of course, I may occupy this role for multiple, and indeed many, desires. Likewise, I may occupy the legal role of owner of *other* land and assets as well, and indeed, many other such assets.

Consider now a desire’s counting as setting a satisfaction-condition. A desire counts as setting a satisfaction-condition in a way analogous to a belief’s setting a truth condition. My belief that *p* only counts as having a truth condition with reference to some other thing (*p*) the obtaining of which fulfills the condition. We cannot describe this belief of mine except partly in terms of its object. Similarly, we cannot describe my *desire* that *p* except partly in terms of its object. To speak of *the same belief, but with a different object*, would be nonsensical. Instead, we would speak of a *different* belief. It is similarly nonsensical to speak of *the same desire, but with a different object*. Instead, we speak of a *different* desire. Like beliefs, desires count as setting their constitutive conditions even when their objects do not obtain. My belief that *p* still has the truth-condition *that* *p* even if *p* does not obtain. This is precisely what allows us to assess my belief as *false*. Likewise, my desire that *p* still counts as setting the satisfaction-condition

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69 You might worry that this case is disanalogous to that of desire-satisfactions because the *particular monetary value* of the land is fixed independently by the market, not by me as the owner. But we can avoid this worry aside by stipulating the following theory of market value for purposes of the case: the market value is whatever a willing buyer and seller mutually agree to pay for the land in a transaction. And I as the owner will only accept an amount *n* of money in a transaction, neither less nor more. (Perhaps, we can imagine, I have some convictions about justice such that I am not willing to accept more than I myself take the land to be worth.) Now the market value is only intelligible with reference to me, the owner, and the disanalogy is avoided.

70 To make this plausible, suppose that I am an entrepreneur with stakes in many successful start-up ventures.
that p even if p does not obtain. This is precisely what allows us to assess my desire as (for now) unsatisfied.

Consider all of this in the context of a concrete case. Suppose I desire, just for its own sake, that my mother is happy right now. My desire that my mother is happy right now exists independently of whether or not she in fact is. And, similarly, the state of affairs consisting in my mother’s being happy right now obtains (or not) independently of my desiring it. But my desire that she be happy right now only counts as setting a satisfaction-condition with reference to the possible state of affairs consisting in her being happy right now. There is no sense to be made of my in fact having this desire without reference to what it is about, and therefore what would satisfy it if the possible state of affairs it picks out is actualized. Similarly, my mother’s being happy right now only counts as a satisfier with reference to this desire, or with reference to some other desire on her own or someone else’s part. Independently of these desires, the state of affairs might yet obtain, but without having the relational property of being a satisfier.

Having made these clarifications, we can now say that the statuses satisfaction-condition and satisfier are mutually interdependent—not just epistemically but metaphysically.\(^71\) Something’s being a satisfier is only possible in a world that also contains a corresponding satisfaction-condition. And something’s being a satisfaction-condition is only coherent when it is the case that there is a possible (though perhaps non-actual) satisfier of the condition. Nothing has one of these statuses—nothing is one of

\(^{71}\) See McKenna (2012, 53-54) for more on mutually interdependent concepts. This claim is importantly different than the claim that the desire and its object, \(p\), are themselves mutually interdependent. As we have seen, the desires make essential reference to their objects. But these objects do not depend on desires for their existence. They do, however, depend on desires in order to exist as satisfiers, and it is only as satisfiers that they can count as parts of whole desire-satisfactions.
these things—in the absence of something else having the other status—something else’s being the other kind of thing.

So \( D(p) & p \) is indeed not gerrymandered, since its parts are mutually interdependent \textit{qua} their status of parts of a desire-satisfaction. It is not \textit{ad hoc} to consider them parts of a larger whole. In fact, it is incoherent \textit{not} to. Only with reference to the whole do we understand how the parts serve, respectively, as ground and bearer of the goodness of a contribution to well-being. Because of this fact, neither does the proposed view commit the fallacy of composition. It is only in virtue of the (possible) whole that the parts count, respectively, that we have an intelligible explanation of the goodness born. The whole (the desire-satisfaction) figures ineliminably in an explanation of its own goodness by figuring ineliminably in an explanation of why the satisfier, \( p \), counts as a satisfier. And \( p \)’s counting as a satisfier it what explains its goodness; \( p \) considered in itself does not possess goodness for anyone.

8. The Experience Requirement

According to the \textit{experience requirement}, something is good for a person only if it stands in a certain relation to her conscious experience or awareness. According to this requirement, in order to benefit us, a contribution to well-being must \textit{enter} experience (Griffin 1986, 13), \textit{enter or affect} experience (Sumner 1996, 127), or make a \textit{phenomenological difference} to the experience of the individual whose good is at issue (Bramble 2016, 88).\textsuperscript{72} When applied to desire-satisfactionism, the experience requirement is often taken to imply the awareness requirement discussed earlier: \( p \), the obtaining object of \( S \)’s desire, is good for \( S \) if but only if \( S \) is aware that \( p \) obtains. In order for a

\textsuperscript{72} See Hawkins (2016) for further discussion.
desire-satisfaction to make a difference to S’s experience, S must know (via some form of experiential awareness) that the desire has been satisfied. Call this standard picture the back-end understanding of the experience requirement.

If we accept both the experience requirement and a Hobbesian view of desire-satisfactions, then we thereby commit ourselves to this more specific back-end requirement. On the Hobbesian view of desire-satisfactions, they just consist in the obtaining of the object. So experience of the object’s obtaining is required for experience to be involved in the contribution to well-being, since these come to the same thing. But the Moorean view of desire-satisfactions allows for a different possibility: front-end fulfillment of the experience requirement. On the Moorean view, S’s desire is itself an inseparable constituent of the concomitant desire-satisfaction. Since every desire relevant to well-being is itself an experience, every Moorean desire-satisfaction in fact makes a difference to S’s experience in virtue of one of its parts doing so. Each such desire-satisfaction includes an experience of desiring, and so fulfills the experience requirement, even if S never becomes aware that the object of her desire obtains.\(^{73}\)

I doubt that proponents of the experience requirement would accept this as genuinely fulfilling the purported requirement. They would, I think, claim that the requirement should instead be taken to require awareness of the whole state of affairs that constitutes the contribution. For Moorean desire-satisfactions, this includes both the desire and the object of the desire’s obtaining. I reject this strong version of the

\(^{73}\) One might worry that the experience requirement is here fulfilled by the desire qua experience, not qua setter of a satisfaction condition. But as we have seen, desires refer to their objects essentially. It seems unintelligible to say that the same desire could have a different object. What we would then have is a different desire. And on the affective conception of desire, desires have their satisfaction conditions in virtue of being affective experiences: it is in virtue of presenting possible states of affairs favorably that desires count as setting satisfaction conditions. So we cannot draw a clean distinction between the desire qua experience and the desire qua setter of a satisfaction condition in the way this worry supposes. I thank George Sher for raising this issue to me.
requirement. If we accept the strong version of the requirement, we are forced to say that Nagel’s man who is betrayed and ridiculed without his knowledge suffers no harm. We would have to say that his life goes just as well as it would if we held fixed his blissful ignorance while removing all hidden betrayal and ridicule from him life. Because this consequence is implausible, we should reject this stronger version of the experience requirement.

Some, like Kagan (1992), have thought that we are forced to endorse something like an experience requirement because experiences are the only plausible bearers of well-being. Kagan supports this claim on the following grounds: “What is of benefit to a person must involve the person’s intrinsic properties” (Kagan 1992, 185). Since a person is nothing more than a mind and a body, and since changes to a person’s body do not plausibly contribute to well-being independently of effecting changes in her mind, changes in well-being must involve changes to the person’s mind (Kagan 1992, 181-182). Kagan laments this conclusion, saying, “I wish I could comfortably reject the claim that what benefits someone must affect her intrinsically. But before I can do this, I need some sort of account that would precisely locate and diagnose the error in the thought that benefit must make an intrinsic difference” (Kagan 1992, 186-187).

I think that we can in fact diagnose a confusion here. Kagan often speaks in the pertinent section of this essay of changes in well-being requiring changes in an individual’s intrinsic properties, and so changes in the individual’s mind. But in one of the key passages that I quoted above (Kagan 1992, 185), Kagan speaks only of benefits involving the individual’s intrinsic properties. This is a weaker requirement, and one that affective desire-satisfactions fulfill. Some of my intrinsic properties, such as the property
of having certain affective desires, put me in relation with extra-mental features of reality (i.e., the objects of these desires). The goodness of affective desire-satisfactions, the fact of their counting as benefits to me, depends solely on my intrinsic properties because it my affective desires that fix what things count as contributions. But the contribution to my well-being (the desire-satisfaction) can be partly extra-mental, including states of the world rather than just states of my mind. Rather than saying that the bearers of well-being must all be mental states, we can instead say that the grounds or explanations of contributions to well-being must be mental states. This gives us a clear conception of how benefits to well-being can depend crucially on an individual’s intrinsic properties without restricting us to the solipsistic mental-statism about well-being that Kagan laments.74

The Moorean conception of desire-satisfactions implies a complexity of structure, consisting in their goodness for an individual being robustly intrinsic. This complexity of structure, I have claimed, amounts to a richer explanation of these matters than a Hobbesian conception of desire-satisfactions can offer. But it is worth noting that someone who rejects these claims can still affirm what I said in Sections 1-6 of this chapter, adopting instead a Hobbesian conception of desire-satisfactions, and of the goods I will soon describe in Chapter 4. Such a view would affirm that the goodness of contributions to well-being is explained by affective experience, and so would still be in keeping with the core thesis of my project.

74 Kagan would likely point out that, in going this route, we are required to say that Parfit benefits in his imagined case of desiring that a stranger on a train recover from an illness, even though Parfit never sees the stranger again or learns of the recovery (Parfit 1984, Appendix I). But given the choice between saying this and saying that life goes extraordinarily well in the experience machine, I find it the far easier bullet to bite.
9. Conclusion

The account of intrinsic goodness for an individual that I defend is readily suggested in the case of pleasure. We have now seen that the account applies equally well, though less obviously, in the case of desire-satisfactions. A theory of well-being can affirm the fundamental relevance of both of these goods while maintaining a unified picture of the nature of well-being. This concludes my basic statement of that unified approach. Now it is time to put the approach to further theoretical work: explaining the goodness of purportedly *objective* goods proposed by objective list theories.
Chapter 4

Affect, Import, and Purportedly Objective Goods

1. Introduction

The previous chapters have laid the groundwork for an explanatory and not merely enumerative theory of well-being, Affectivism. This theory claims that affective experience makes otherwise eudaimonically neutral states of affairs into contributions to well-being. This feature of Affectivism makes it a subjectivist theory of well-being, in that it says all goodness for an individual is mind-dependent. As I argue in Chapter 2, this way of drawing the distinction between subjectivism and objectivism tracks what is most theoretically important in the dispute between these two camps. This contrasts with drawing the distinction in terms of the attitude-dependence or -independence of what is good for an individual. My way of drawing the distinction says instead that subjectivist theories are ones that explain well-being by appealing to an individual’s subjective states, be they attitudes or not; objectivist theories explain well-being via an explanatory appeal of some other kind, such as to human nature or to subject-independent value properties.

This is more easily seen by distinguishing between a contribution to and a determinant of well-being. A contribution to well-being is a states of affairs that has intrinsic value for an individual. To be a contribution to an individual’s well-being is to
be a good or a bad for her: a bearer of her well-being. A *determinant* of well-being is a state of affairs that *explains why* a contribution to well-being has the value it does for an individual: a ground of her well-being. According to subjectivism in my sense, the determinants of an individual’s well-being are some class of her mental states. According to the more specific Affectivism, the determinants of well-being are *affective* mental states. Every contribution to well-being has a determinant as a (non-gerrymandered) part, since this is required for the value involved to be *intrinsic* in the right sense. Some contributions to well-being have no proper parts other than a determinant, as I claimed of pleasures and pains in Chapter 2. Some contributions have parts beyond their determinants, as I claimed of desire-satisfactions in Chapter 3. This allows Affectivism to avoid experience machine worries for subjectivist theories without departing from subjectivism’s core insight than an individual’s good is determined by her own subjective states. Affectivism says that some subjective states (e.g., desires) make it the case that certain things matter to my well-being, without themselves ensuring that those things come about.\(^75\)

Because Affectivism is not the only possible version of subjectivism, it is helpfully contrasted with another version of this type of theory, which I call the Import Theory. This chapter begins by describing Helm (2002)’s concept of *import* and showing how it might figure in a theory of well-being. While the Import Theory is a plausible theory of well-being in many respects, it is subject to important difficulties. I canvas some problem cases for subjectivist theories of well-being in order to show how Affectivism is well-positioned to solve these problems in a way that allows it to preserve important strengths of the Import Theory.

\(^75\) I thank Charles Siewert for this way of putting the point.
This comparison yields two important lessons about Affectivism. First, it has greater extensional plausibility than other subjectivist views. Most subjectivist views are extensionally plausible in realistic cases that hold fixed ordinary human psychology and life conditions. But they struggle with counterfactual scenarios in which an individual has an atypical psychology, or in which the individual’s life conditions are radically different than those of ordinary people. Affectivism is extensionally plausible not only in actual cases but *modally* as well, generating plausible verdicts for actual, typical subjects as well as merely possible, atypical ones.

Second, the way in which Affectivism explains the intrinsic goodness of ostensibly objective goods yields general principles about how it handles issues of *weighting* and *tradeoffs*. One might have thought that Affectivism would yield a crude picture of these matters, counseling that what is best for an individual is a function of her present, actual affective states (together with the obtaining of the intentional objects of those that have objects). The picture that emerges in this chapter is considerably more complicated. Affectivism’s treatment of ostensibly objective goods appeals to the idea that what is best for an individual depends crucially upon her *possible* as well as her actual affective states, a feature of the view incorporating insights of the Import Theory, Mill ([1861] 1969)’s work on pleasure, and Lin (forthcoming)’s work on desire. This allows Affectivism to affirm the existence of *reasons for affective states*: that it would be better for an individual to have some affective state gives her a reason, by her own lights, to have that state (and this despite such states generally not being under direct voluntary control).
Utilizing the resulting lessons about Affectivism, this chapter then subsumes ostensibly *objective* goods within an Affectivist framework, vindicating ostensibly objectivist intuitions. This subsumptive project includes the following person-involving goods: *love*, *friendship*, *virtue*, and *self-respect*. Affectivism vindicates the intrinsic goodness of these goods for their subject without straying beyond a subjectivist framework. This is in contrast to some other purported intrinsic goods—such as knowledge—whose goodness is not vindicated by the Affectivist framework in the same way. While Affectivism cannot vindicate the intrinsic goodness of knowledge goods, however, it does provide a vindication of the intuition that it is *deeply relevant* to well-being, and carves out for it a special instrumental role. Affectivism explains why theorists of well-being are correct to pay significant attention to knowledge. Knowledge is plausibly a Rawlsian *primary good*: an all-purpose instrumental good whose usefulness runs so deep as to be easily mistaken for an intrinsic good (Rawls 1971, 62). This analysis of knowledge helps me address a final problem for subjectivist views: whether and how to count contributions to well-being about which an individual is *unaware*.

2. Helm’s Concept of Import

So far, I have rejected any kind of deep pluralism about well-being, claiming instead that two mental states that explain well-being (pleasure and desire) have a common affective core. This gives rise to a set of basic commitments about the relations between such states. First, whatever other differences may obtain between the determinant mental states, they share the phenomenal similarity that marks them as *affective* in my sense. These states only being characterizable in irreducibly evaluative language that is itself
only intelligible with reference to the first-personal experience of being in these states. Second, the determinant mental states are rankable not just along the general dimension of how well or poorly they can contribute to one’s life going, but have this property in virtue of being rankable along the more specific dimensions of affective polarity (i.e., being positive or negative) and intensity (i.e., the strength of the positive or negative affect).

This raises a question: are there further ways in which the determinant mental states (and so the contributions they explain) relate to one another? For example, might one such state warrant another by counting for or against it, serving as a reason for having it (or not having it)?

One of the best-developed views of these matters is Helm (2002)’s. It is worth noting at the outset that Helm and I come to these problems from different theoretical directions. I have begun in ethical theory and sought to address various problems by drawing upon the philosophy of mind. Helm’s starting point is the critical project of questioning some widespread doctrines in the philosophy of mind in order to articulate a more accurate view of neglected aspects of our mental life, these aspects being the affective ones, from which he then goes on to draw important conclusions in ethics.

Perhaps because of this difference in emphasis, perhaps because of the more ambitious nature of his project, or perhaps simply because these issues were not so clearly in disciplinary focus when he wrote as they are now, Helm does not, so far as I am aware, provide a developed theory of well-being. But his views on how affective states relate to one another are valuable material for theorizing about well-being. Indeed, they readily suggest an intriguing theory of the same subjectivist kind as mine. For these
reasons, I will briefly sketch not only Helm’s views on the relations between affective states, but also how those views might figure in a theory of well-being. This allows for useful comparison and contrast with my own theory. Importantly, I am not imputing this theory, nor the problems that I eventually raise for it, to Helm. Instead, I am employing a concept that he has developed and demonstrating one way in which it might inform a theory of well-being. On the basis of problems that arise for the resulting theory, I then offer an alternative way to make use of Helmian import and defend this way as the optimal incorporation of Helm’s ideas in a theory of well-being.

On Helm’s view, there is a *sui generis* category of mental states, *felt evaluations*. Helm views “pleasure and pain as characteristic of a distinctive kind of intrinsically motivating evaluation that is shared in common among emotions, desires, and (some) sensations” (Helm 2002, 13). Hedonic states are Helm’s base case, consisting as they do in something *feeling good or bad*. As we saw in my Chapter 2, spelling out precisely what this means is difficult business. Helm considers but rejects the idea that felt evaluation is a special kind of evaluative judgment. He agrees with Nelkin (1994)’s proposal that hedonic states are *spontaneous* and *non-inferential*, but finds this insufficient for distinguishing felt evaluation from “ordinary evaluative judgment” (Helm 2002, 14). Helm thinks that a view appealing only to these features fails to account for the connection between hedonic states and motivation, without which a view of these matters would be “almost unintelligible” (Helm 2002, 14.). Nonetheless, felt evaluation does share with evaluative judgment “a sense of how things are going—whether well or poorly” (Helm 2002, 16). The trick is to explain how this feature links up with motivation. In accounting for this connection, Helm deploys the distinguishing
component of his view: the concept of something possessing import, of its mattering to an individual.

Felt evaluations, Helm says, “impose themselves on us in feeling (i.e., pleasantly or painfully) only because they are rooted in broader patterns in one’s emotions and desires generally” (Helm 2002, 13). Helm’s position is therefore a holistic one: felt evaluations involve not merely a sense of how well or poorly things are going, but how well or poorly things are going with reference to a background set of other felt evaluations and corresponding dispositions. Something has import for an individual just in case it is the object (“focus” in his terminology) of a felt evaluation that is part of a broader constellation of other mental states. Helm gives the example of a Ming vase cherished by an art lover (Helm 2002, 15). Such an art lover will presumably take pleasure in viewing the vase, and desire the vase’s continued existence. But the vase only counts as genuinely having import for the art lover in virtue of a broader constellation of felt evaluations and dispositions, for example, dispositions to fear that the vase will be destroyed by some dangerous activity and to be angry with someone who throws a baseball at it (Helm 2002, 15).

This has several important consequences. The first is that “import is relative to the individual: it is constituted by our cares and concerns” (Helm 2002, 16). This renders it subjective in the sense of being “constituted by us” in a way that implicates our motivation (Helm 2002, 17). But a second is that the holistic nature of import yields important senses in which it is objective. Import “impresses itself on us” as a genuine feature of objects (Helm 2002, 16).76 This, of course, is compatible with (and indeed, requires) its being subjective in the grounding sense: the background constellation of

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76 See also Horgan and Timmons (2008) on the idea of an experience’s having objective purport.
similarly-focused mental states are precisely what make it the case that the object really
does have import for an individual. This renders import “rationally prior to particular
emotions,” which is to say that felt evaluations can be warranted or unwarranted (Helm
2002, 16). For any particular, atomic felt evaluation, an individual’s background
constellation of related mental states can tell in favor of or against it. This is because
“having a particular emotion commits one to feel a broad pattern of other emotions with
the same focus” (Helm 2002, 17, my emphasis). To see this, consider what we would
think if an individual’s mental life did not exhibit a broader pattern of this kind. We
would rightfully doubt whether the object of the particular felt evaluation really mattered
to her (Helm 2002, 17).

Helm thinks we would also rightfully doubt this in another kind of case: that in
which we lacked motivation regarding that which was supposed to have input for us. He
writes:

To be committed in feeling an emotion to the import of its focus,
therefore, is in part to be committed to continue to pay attention to what
happens to that focus as the present circumstances unfold, as well as to
pay attention to it in other circumstances, and to respond as these
circumstances demand (Helm 2002, 17).

To fail to pay attention to a focus of apparent import or fail to act in ways that would
protect or promote that focus, Helm thinks, typically shows it to lack genuine import.
This is what finally supplies us with the crucial connection to motivation. To have import
is not merely to be the common focus of a constellation of related felt evaluations, but
also to be the focus of a set of dispositions to attention and action.
3. Import and Well-Being

Having described Helm’s basic picture of our affective mental life, we can now turn to a theory of well-being inspired by his concept of import. I call this view the Import Theory. Once again, I am not imputing this theory to Helm, but rather exploring it as one initially appealing way to incorporate his ideas in a theory of well-being. In formulating the Import Theory, I will appeal once again to the distinction between determinants of well-being and contributions to well-being.

What might the determinants of well-being be on a Helmian Import Theory? As the name I have given the theory suggests, I think that import itself is the answer. On Helm’s view, import allows us to make sense of an individual’s “evaluative point of view” (Helm 2002, 23) in a way that brings with it both the normative concept of warrant and a connection with motivation. These features make Helmian import a highly attractive centerpiece upon which to build a subjectivist theory of well-being. Import readily supplies us with an intelligible conception of the good-for relation. On a quite natural interpretation, import is affective in my sense: it is only adequately characterizable in irreducibly evaluative terms, supplying us with an appropriate notion of goodness, and that characterization is itself intelligible only via appeal to the subject’s own first-personal experience, supplying us with an appropriate notion of the goodness as for her in the perspectival sense of ‘for’ I have described in earlier chapters.

Once this is recognized, a natural and plausible account of contributions to well-being presents itself. On the Import Theory, the contributions to an individual’s well-being will be complex states of affairs consisting in i) the things that have import for her, and ii) the mental state constellations that give them their import. This allows the Import
Theory to appeal to my earlier account of how goodness-for can be robustly *intrinsic*. The argument is structurally identical to those that I offered in favor of the intrinsicality of desire-satisfactions. Just as no state of affairs counts as a *satisfier* without reference to a corresponding desire, nothing counts as a *focus* of import without reference to a felt evaluation and related constellation of mental states. Just as desires count as setting a *satisfaction-condition* only with reference to the possible object that would fulfill that condition, no constellation of mental states counts as fixing a *condition of import* without reference to what would fulfill that condition. And not only that: a collection of mental states only counts as a *unified constellation* with reference to a common focus. Therefore, *focus of import* and *import-fixer* are mutually interdependent concepts. Something having import for an individual is thus a complex, non-gerrymandered, relational state of affairs. This state of affairs has as one part the constellation of import-fixing mental states, and as another the existence of the focus of import. It is the *whole* that these parts constitute that allows us to understand the parts as having the statuses of import-focus and import-fixer, respectively. On the Import Theory, it is these wholes that are intrinsically good for individuals.

**4. Worries for the Import Theory**

Despite its initial attractiveness as a theory of well-being, the Import Theory faces problems that Affectivism avoids. The first potential problem is the inclusion of dispositions to attention and motivation as themselves part of the Import Theory’s conception of intrinsic goodness for an individual. It is not sufficient for something’s having Helmian import that it be the focus of a felt evaluation, or even a felt evaluation
plus a related constellation of other felt evaluations. Dispositions to attention and motivation are also required, but it is not clear why this should be so. The crucial notion of goodness-for is supplied by the nature of felt evaluation. The account of how this goodness-for can be intrinsic, too, need appeal only to the relation between felt evaluations (or constellations of felt evaluations, or dispositions to have felt evaluations, etc.) and their foci.

The question at issue is how the concept of import relates to the evaluative concept of well-being—intrinsic goodness for an individual. It is usually taken to be a further question how a theory of this evaluative concept relates to attentional and motivational dispositions. While the connection to motivation proposed by Helm may be theoretically useful in other ways, it looks like a spare wheel when included as a required feature of determinants of well-being. Not only that, but it also generates implausible results in certain kinds of cases, as we shall see shortly.

The second problem for the Import Theory is the problem of singular felt evaluations, that is, ones that lack the backing of a constellation of related felt evaluations. Consider, for example, pleasant surprises:

To enjoy a thing it is not logically necessary that one should have desired it or that one would desire its preservation or that one should desire the continuation or repetition of his experience of it. ... I might, on passing a garden by chance, enjoy the scent of flowers without sniffing, lingering, returning, or trying to do these things or having the least inclination to do these things (Perry 1967, 204-205). 77

As pleasures, singular felt evaluations like this one are plausibly intrinsically good for their subject. But the Import Theory seems ill-equipped to explain this fact. By hypothesis, experiences like this one lack the support of a background constellation of

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77 See also Heathwood (2007, 30-31)’s discussion of Perry.
other felt evaluations with a common focus and related dispositions to attention and motivation. The Import Theory seems then to imply that such experiences are not in fact good for their subjects. It will therefore generate implausible results in cases in which felt evaluations do not have the backing of further felt evaluations with a common focus.

There is a broader theoretical problem here: If a singular felt evaluation does not generate any contribution to well-being on its own, how does even an arbitrarily large collection of these individually non-generative states do so? Any such view faces a Sorites paradox. The problem here appears to be the deep form of holism that characterizes the Import Theory. The theoretical attractiveness of views that appeal to affect resides in the nature of affect. But affect is, fundamentally, realized in singular states rather than being an emergent property that only a whole collection of states can exhibit. So deep holism turns out to be in tension with a theoretical appeal to the nature of affect.

5. Possible Affective States

My friendly amendment to the Import Theory is to instead embrace only a more moderate holism. While I find Helm’s idea of import a powerful theoretical tool, its successful incorporation in a theory of well-being requires assigning it a more indirect role concerning the determinants of well-being. The Import Theory reaps some of the benefits of idealized subjectivist theories by requiring that contributions to well-being already be, in some sense, partially idealized. By this I mean that, in having the backing of a whole

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78 Note that values-based theories of well-being—a class of theories of which the Import Theory is plausibly a member, or at least a close cousin—all share this problem. Raibley (2013) lists Raibley (2010), Tiberius and Plakias (2010), Tiberius and Hall (2010), and Haybron and Tiberius (2012) as examples of such theories.
constellation of related felt evaluations, contributions to well-being as envisioned by the Import Theory are already some of the way along in what looks very much like a process of idealization. The Import Theory points to coherence relations obtaining between parts of the overall structure of an individual’s affective mental life: affirmation or support of a given state by similarly focused states, and pruning or revision of states that imply dissonance in the structure. It claims that the having of one felt valuation thereby commits an individual to a broader constellation of mental states that harmonizes with it.

To return to Helm’s example of the vase and the art lover, we can say that the art lover’s desire that the vase continue to exist rationally commits her to the dispositions of fear or anger at its being threatened that I discussed before. And it likewise commits her to enjoying viewing the vase, keeping it in good conditions, and so on.

But there is another way to incorporate these insights within a ground-subjectivist framework. Instead of understanding import in terms of an individual’s actual mental states, and requiring the existence of a constellation of these states, we can instead appeal to coherence with the possible mental states an individual might have and the structural constellations they might compose. Consider how this would apply in the above case of Perry’s garden passerby. The pleasurable scent, as a pleasure, is plausibly intrinsically good for the individual, if only to a modest degree. The garden passerby is stipulated not to have any motivational states regarding the scent or the enjoyment of it: not before, not during, and not after. But one might say, in the spirit of the Import Theory, that such motivation would be warranted. So too would antecedent affective desire, since this would a related felt evaluation with a common focus that mutually supports the felt evaluations involved in the pleasure. As something that appeals to the garden passerby,
the enjoyable scent is suitable to serve as a foundation around which to build a more robust constellation of affective states and related dispositions. That the scent appeals to the garden passerby provides, by the lights of the Import Theory, at least some commitment to these further states. For the Import Theory suggests that a central state such as this commit one to a broader constellation of affective and motivational states. The central state’s being subjectively worth having for an individual implies that these further, suitably connected states are also worthwhile. This constellation of further states in turn provides valuational backing for the central state, conferring greater significance on its object than the singular central state would on its own.

On the Affectivist picture, we can therefore plausibly say that felt evaluations like pleasure give the subject reasons, by her own lights, in favor of (or against) the having of certain other related states. As is the case with import, it will not be mere coherence but the harmony consisting in mutual support and reinforcement that would result that warrants these related states. Crucially, some of these states are motivational states. While such states do not in themselves explain contributions to well-being, they aim at the promotion or realization of what does. These motivational dispositions are warranted by, and expressive of, the valuation involved in the central, anchoring state.

Affectivism is in a stronger position than the Import Theory when it comes to justifying this claim. It can take on board the Import Theory’s idea that a singular felt evaluation (or rather, valuation, given the distinction I drew between valuation and evaluation I drew in Chapter 1) commits one to certain other valuations and related motivations. But Affectivism can also provide an additional justification for the claim that it makes good sense to think of affective states as more or less warranted. Consider
Mill ([1861] 1969)’s doctrine of higher and lower pleasures. Mill’s explanation for the fact that some people choose lower pleasures over higher ones is that indulgence in lower pleasures sometimes makes people incapable of experiencing higher ones. Elsewhere, I claim that this provides Mill with an account of why such people have a reason to make themselves capable of enjoying higher pleasures: namely, that if they did again become capable of and in fact experience higher pleasures, these would then be more appealing to them the lower pleasures they are currently choosing (Zuk 2018). Call this Mill’s counterfactual pleasure principle.

Mill’s counterfactual pleasure principle remains plausible even when divorced from Mill’s particular commitments. Leaving aside, in particular, his doctrine of higher and lower pleasures (along with the theoretical role he affords to desire in this doctrine), we can consider instead only pleasures of greater and lesser intensity, with equal durations. If pleasure is good for an individual, and this fact gives the individual reason to pursue it, then the individual has a reason to pursue pleasures of greater intensity, other things being equal. But suppose it is not now the case that some experience would count as a pleasure for an individual (its phenomenal features would not present attractively to her), given her current tastes, but that it would if she cultivated different tastes, and that it would then be enjoyed more by her. Mill’s principle says that, other things being equal, that the individual should cultivate these different tastes.79

Lin (forthcoming) develops a similar pair of principles about desires. Though his analysis is not about eudaimonic reasons in particular, its relevance here is clear. Lin is concerned with what to say about cases in which what I do now affects the content of my

79 By tastes, I simply mean the collection of psychological facts about an individual in virtue of which experiences would have appealing phenomenal features, and so count as pleasures, for her if she were to have these experiences.
future desires, and whether they will be satisfied. Consider his case of the exotic dish, in which I now have no desire to eat some exotic food but would, upon eating the food, concurrently desire to be eating it (Lin forthcoming, 2). It is plausible, Lin says, that this gives me a reason to try the exotic dish—especially if desire-based theories of reasons are correct. If I do try the dish, after all, I will obtain something that I will then want.

Lin’s analysis is meant to overcome Parfit (2011, 73-82)’s Agony Argument against subjectivist theories of reasons. The Agony Argument hinges on the alleged inability of subjectivist theories of reasons to account for my reason to avoid future agony, supposing that I do not now have the desire to avoid some particular episode of future agony. But Lin points out that, once we find it plausible that I have reasons regarding the desire-satisfactions I might have depending on what I do now, we should also find it plausible that I have reasons regarding desire-frustrations that I might have depending on what I do now. I have a present reason to avoid agony, Lin argues, due to the future desire-frustration that agony would involve, together with the fact that once I was in agony I would desire strongly not to be.

Lin’s analysis therefore yields two principles, one for desire-satisfactions and one for desire-frustrations:

(1) If your doing $A$ at $t$ would promote the satisfaction of a desire that you would have at a time later than $t$ if you were to do $A$ at $t$, then there is a reason for you to do $A$ at $t$.

(2) If your not doing $A$ at $t$ would promote the frustration of a desire that you would have at a time later than $t$ if you were not to do $A$ at $t$, then there is a reason for you to do $A$ at $t$ (Lin forthcoming, 23).

In other words, I have reason to (1) do what will lead me to have a future desire that will then be fulfilled, and (2) avoid doing what will lead me to have a future desire that will
then be frustrated. Importantly, these principles apply only to desiring something for its own sake, not to instrumental desires.\footnote{You might worry that Lin’s first principle implies that, in Parfit (1984, 496)’s case of harmless addiction, I have reason to make myself an addict. But the response that I followed Heathwood in offering in Chapter 3 seems sufficient here; if we imagine that I genuinely affectively desire to take the drug, then it does plausibly benefit me. And if I do not, then I do not desire it in the way that is relevant to well-being, and the principle therefore does not say that I have a reason to take the drug. I thank George Sher for raising this worry to me.}

We can unify Mill’s principle with Lin’s two principles to yield a generalized principle regarding reasons in favor of (or against) the having of affective states other than those we now have:

**Unified Principle:** I have a reason to do what will realize affective goods for me, and a reason to do what will avoid realizing affective bads for me.

To *realize* is here defined to mean *cause or constitute*. The Unified Principle implies reasons to have or not have particular affective states (since these constitute, in part or in whole, affective goods and bads). It also implies reasons to *cause* ourselves to have or not have those affective states, when we can (since we thereby bring about or avoid what constitutes the good or bad).

You might worry that the Unified Principle is too strong, since it implies that I have a reason to take a very large number of actions. For example, it implies that I have reason to take any vacation that would be net positive in affective goods over affective bads. But the Unified Principle claims only that I have a reason to take each of these various vacations, not *decisive* reason or even *strong* reason to take them. Whether I have decisive or even strong reason will depend on how these different vacation options compare to one another, and to all of the various non-vacation options available to me.

Plausibly, *every* theory of well-being implies just this result: that I have a prudential reason to choose the prudentially better over the prudentially worse. The point of the
Unified Principle is to offer a substantive conception of what kinds of thing (i.e., affective goods and bads) gives me prudential reasons. In this way, it offers a principle of assessing what is prudentially *best*, and hence, what I have decisive prudential reason to do.

Combined with the Import Theory’s insight that our present affective states *also* give us reasons for or against the having of other affective states, the Unified Principle yields a plausible framework for assessing the degree to which our present affective states are warranted. However, we need to better specify the relationship between the reasons implied by the Unified Principle and those implied by Helmian import. This not only serves to clarify Affectivism’s overall picture of the prudential reasons we have, but also avoids some intuitively unacceptable results that the Unified Principle might otherwise be thought to have.

### 6. Two Types of Reasons?

One might wonder if the reasons with which Mill and Lin concern themselves are of the *same* kind as those with which Helm is concerned. What exactly is the relationship between reasons arising from Helmian import and reasons arising from conditionals about possible pleasures and desires I might have (*in this section, I call these “H-reasons” and “ML-reasons,” respectively*)? One might be tempted to think that these are fundamentally different kinds of reasons, casting doubt on whether they are commensurable. But this would be a mistake. But both can in fact be explained by the *authority* that an individual’s own evaluative outlook has for her (or, more accurately, *through* her) in the domain of prudential reason. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Dorsey
(2017, 196) claims that individuals have evaluative authority in the sense of “authority to determine the good.” I here make use only of the less demanding idea of an individual’s evaluative (or valuational, to stick with my own terminology) outlook being authoritative in the determination of her own good, and therefore of its being what settles questions about her prudential reasons.

We often make decisions about both the near and distant future on the basis of what we think will be pleasurable, engaging, appealing, and fulfilling. We do this in a way that is often tempered by considerations of feasibility that sometimes defeat our grander aspirations, causing us to revise them. What would explain the prudential rationality of this? For a hedonist, the answer is clear: I have prudential reason to choose the possible future involving the most pleasure (balanced against pain), even though it may sometimes be difficult to discern which future that is. As Mill shows, this may involve changing the tastes that determine what things give me pleasure. For a desire-satisfactionist, the answer is also clear: I have prudential reason to choose the possible future involving more desire-satisfaction (balanced against desire-frustration), even though it may be sometimes be difficult to discern which future that is. As Lin shows, this may involve changing my desires. The same goes for Affectivism: I have prudential reason to choose some possible future insofar as it contains more affect-involving goods (balanced against affect-involving bads), even though it may likewise sometimes may be difficult to discern which future that is, and this may involve changing my tastes and attitudes.

We can sum up this idea as follows: ML-reasons arise when the authority of one’s valuational outlook is applied to the content of that very outlook itself, thereby implying
verdicts about the comparative value of changes to that outlook.\textsuperscript{81} Often, there are prudential reasons to have some affective state that you do not now have (or to \textit{not} have some affective state that you \textit{do} now have), because if you did, you would be better off (or would avoid being worse off). ML-reasons are therefore \textit{structural reasons}: reasons concerning the overall structure (and thereby bearing too on the particular content) of one’s well-being-determining affective states themselves.\textsuperscript{82} Though affective states are not under our direct voluntary control, this does not preclude the claim that we have reasons to have some than others.

In more concrete terms, what kinds of things do ML-reasons favor? Plausible candidates include the discovery of new passions, maturations in our tastes, the choosing of friends and partners who will challenge us or spur our personal growth, and in general the promotion in ourselves of experiences and attitudes the having of which lend themselves to new, greater (or even indefinite) ways of elaboration or refinement.\textsuperscript{83} The key idea is that there are some experiences, attitudes, and underlying features of our tastes and character that allow us to “gild and stain” the world with wider or denser constellations of positive affect, providing a kind of well-spring for well-being, as it were. Not all constellations of affective states are equal from the standpoint of prudential reason. Some open up new frontiers for more and more powerful affective engagement with the world, while others narrow our modes of such engagement, closing off important frontiers (as Mill claims of what he takes to be “lower” pleasures). This idea is sharpened

\textsuperscript{81} Baier (1985, 225) raises a similar idea in her interpretation of Hume’s conception of morality, according to which it involves “turning sentiments on sentiments.”

\textsuperscript{82} Another fitting label might be “architectonic reasons,” but this term is employed by Dorsey (2016, ch., 1) to refer to reasons for conforming to particular abstract standpoints (e.g., those of etiquette and morality).

\textsuperscript{83} I thank Charles Siewert for raising these ideas to me.
by considering some substantive examples, which I do in the remainder of this chapter in considering the goods of love, friendship, virtue, and self-respect.

Before we arrive at that task, however, we need to take stock of an important objection to this general picture. It might be asked, “Why is the fact that things would go better for you given some change to you a prudential reason in favor of that change?”

This might seem a puzzling worry once we have clarified that such change involves things then going better by your own lights, your own valuational standards that (I have argued) give you prudential reasons in the first place. But it could be replied to this that these are standards I would have then, not ones I have now, leaving it unclear why I now have reasons favoring such changes to myself. To this, we can reply that the relevant authority here is not some set of standards that you have at a time. Instead, the authority is, ultimately, just you (as you actually are, in relation to yourself as you could possibly be) qua the exercise of your capacities for affective states, since these are what explains the goodness of what is good for. And, assuming that the change in your outlook is not sufficiently radical or sudden, it will still be you then once the change has occurred. The affective states you will have then will be equally yours, equally constitutive of your valuational outlook, and so just as authoritative as the ones you have now in virtue of being equally determinative of your good.

To make this clearer, consider again Parfit’s case of the person who is indifferent to the prospect of future agony if it occurs on Tuesdays (Parfit 2011). Parfit thinks that the possibility of such a person constitutes a devastating counterexample to desire-based theories of reasons. Lin (forthcoming) replies that it follows from such theories that everyone has a reason, by her own lights, to care about what happens to her on future
Tuesdays, namely, that the things that will happen on some future Tuesday will then be bad by her own lights. If she does not recognize this fact now, she gets things wrong. If she does now recognize it but does not care, she gets things wrong in a different way, arbitrarily counting her future well-being as less significant than her present well-being (Sullivan 2018). What makes this arbitrariness unacceptable, on the view I have set out, is that her future well-being has the very same source as her present well-being. Both spring equally from her own affective states, and her future states of this kind are just as authoritative as her present ones (in virtue of being equally genuine affective states, and equally hers). Her future states are just as determinative of her prudential reasons as her present ones, even if she does not recognize this fact.

What then of H-reasons? Such reasons are in an important sense reasons of coherence: the having of one affective state commits us, Helm says, to the having of other, related ones. To fail to do so is to call into question whole swaths of one’s valuational outlook. This follows from Helm’s holistic conception of how valuational outlooks give us reasons: individual affective states are insufficient on their own, requiring instead a supporting constellation. But H-reasons can be justified without taking on a commitment to strong holism. The avoidance of dissonance, or outright incompatibility, between states making up one’s affective profile is plausibly an essential feature of what it is to have a valuational outlook at all.

An analogy will be helpful in unpacking this idea. Believing that p often commits me, on pain of inconsistency, to believing various other things that p entails (though not everything that it entails). And it certainly commits me to not holding beliefs that entail ~p. This in turn commits me to revising my beliefs if they do in fact involve
inconsistency in this way. The constitutive aim of belief is to represent the way that things are. But the holding of contradictory beliefs is a failure to represent the way that things are, and indeed, a failure to represent even a way that things could be. This is not to say that, once I believe some proposition p, it is rationally impermissible to change my mind about the truth of p and then hold beliefs that entail ~p. Once I cease to believe that p, the rational constraint against believing things that entail ~p ceases with it.

H-reasons embody a structurally analogous constraint on combinations of affective states (e.g., intrinsically desiring both that p and that ~p, intrinsically desiring that p where p consists essentially in one’s own suffering, and so on). Of course, I have said that affective states have a different constitutive aim than representing the world. The constitutive aim of affective states as I have defined them is the application of valuational standards, the sum total of which constitute a valuational outlook. But this difference in constitutive aims does not preclude an analogous argument for consistency in one’s valuational outlook. Just as a set of contradictory beliefs fails to actually constitute a representation of the way the world is (and even of a way the world could be), so too does a set of contradictory valuational standards fail to actually constitute an outlook on the world. But once again, this is not to say that once I have some affective state yielding a valuational standard v, it is rationally impermissible to change my mind, ceasing to have the state that yields v and then having instead states yielding valuational standards that conflict with v. Once I cease to have the state that yields v, the rational constraint against states that conflict with v ceases with it.

Like ML-reasons, H-reason also (despite initial appearances) involve possible affective states that an individual could have. H-reasons are based, it is true, in an
individual’s actual affective states. But H-reasons are only made intelligible by considering these states in relation to other possible states that she could have. The idea of an H-reason invokes possible mental states that I now lack, but the having of which would be in keeping with the states that I now have (or indeed, are such that I am committed to having them in virtue of having the states that I now have. So H-reasons arise not from an individual’s actual affective profile alone, but from how that actual affective profile relates to other possible affective states: ones that it favors an individual taking up because they cohere with and support the ones she now has (making them in that sense authentic for her to take up), and ones that are disfavored due to their incongruity with the ones that she now has. For this reason, they can be thought of as reasons of authenticity.

These reasons of authenticity provide an important check on ML-reasons, which might in principle favor wholesale and rapid change of an individual’s valuational outlook to one completely divorced from the one she previously had. ML-reasons favor such changes when the individual would then be better off, but reasons of authenticity draw our attention to the fact that such changes might leave an individual no longer recognizably herself. Williams (1973) appeals to this fact about the relationship between valuational outlooks and identity in his influential discussion of immortality. In Williams’ view, sufficient change in an individual’s valuational outlook render her no longer herself in the metaphysical sense of personal identity. An ML-reason that supposedly favored such a change could not be a reason for you, because the person who would result from the change would not be you. What you have is a reason of authenticity not to make sure a change.
While Williams’ view has significant plausibility, there is an alternative way of thinking about identity that deserves consideration. A more moderate version of the claim casts it in terms of Korsgaard (2009)’s idea of practical identity rather than classical metaphysical identity. Practical identities are

description[s] under which you value yourself and find your life worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking. Conceptions of practical identity include such things as roles and relationships, citizenship, memberships in in ethnic or religious groups, causes, vocations, professions, and offices. It may be important to you that you are a human being, a woman or a man, a member of a certain profession, someone’s lover or friend, a citizen or an officer of the court, a feminist or an environmentalist, or whatever (Korsgaard 2009, 20, fn. omitted).

Such identities make us who we are not in a deep, classical metaphysical sense, but in the practical one that makes intelligible our having prudential reasons. So on the Kantian picture that Korsgaard develops, it is this kind of identity, rather than classical metaphysical identity (which involves, on this view, a mistaken conception of the nature of identity), that matters where our reasons (prudential and otherwise) are concerned. Drastic or rapid enough changes plausibly threaten our practical identities, leaving the changed person no longer recognizably who they once were. And that makes it similarly plausible that a supposed ML-reason favoring such a change could not be your reason, because the resulting person would not be recognizably you in the way that matters.

I will not attempt to decide between these competing ways of thinking about the concept of identity, but will rest content with having shown that each implies H-reasons that place important limits on the scope and magnitude of an individual’s ML-reasons.

Consider again the Unified Principle from the previous section:

**Unified Principle:** I have a reason to do what will realize affective goods for me, and a reason to do what will avoid realizing affective bads for me.
The Unified Principle, it turns out, unifies not only reasons deriving from conditionals about pleasure and conditional about desire-satisfaction, but also H-reasons. ML-reasons arise from *how good* something would be for me, H-reasons from facts about whether that goodness would genuinely be mine. Despite this difference, both draw their force from *how good* things would be for an individual in some possible state of affairs, these being complex state of affairs involving both affective states and their being her affective states. It turns out, then, that reasons of authenticity are actually themselves structural reasons. What underlies the guidance they give in cases of extreme change is the fact that some sufficiently great changes or some sufficiently rapid rate of change in an individual’s valuational outlook would not benefit her. The goods then obtained would not be hers, because she is no longer herself. The two types of reasons are therefore commensurable after all, each drawing their force from what some change in an individual’s evaluative outlook would mean for her own good.

It is an important fact about reasons of authenticity that they tell against rapid, wholesale, or permanently limiting changes to one’s evaluative outlook that ML-reasons might otherwise imply. Suppose I was given the choice to “infantilize” myself in a quite literal way, permanently reducing my cognitive and affective capacities such that I would massively enjoy and strongly desire nothing more than playing with children’s toys in a brightly colored playpen. Reasons of authenticity counsel strongly against this because my actual constellation of affective states and associated dispositions play a central role in making me who I am. Though the situation envisioned would realize affective goods, they would not be *my* affective goods. On nearly any plausible theory of personal

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84 I thank Charles Siewert for suggesting this example to me.
identity, I would instead cease to exist.\textsuperscript{85} Crucially, to say this is not to afford independent value to one’s current metaphysical or practical identity as such, over and above the affective-involving goods it involves. Instead, it is to recognize that the conditions of my identity through time place constraints on what possible goods would genuinely be mine, and thus what can benefit me according to the Unified Principle.

7. The Significance of Structural Reasons for Well-Being

Subjectivist views of well-being, and even of reasons more broadly, emphasize an individual’s particular valuational outlook. What is less often emphasized (at least as a strength of subjectivist views) is that an individual’s self-given valuational outlook is highly contingent and malleable. Indeed, it is more often critics of subjectivism that emphasize this contingency and malleability in order to cause embarrassment for subjectivism. Because an individual’s valuational outlook is contingent and malleable, we can imagine possible individuals with eccentric or unsavory valuational outlooks, and we can imagine individuals with more typical outlooks changing their outlooks to these more exotic ones (as in the “infantilization” case above). Subjectivists are obliged to admit that even exotic valuational outlooks ground facts about the relevant individuals’ well-being, and are apparently obliged to admit further that there is not much to be said by way of rational criticism of such outlooks.

But the further appearance that there is not much for subjectivists to say about such cases is show to be merely apparent, rather than actual, once we recognize the existence of structural prudential reasons. The very same contingency and malleability of

\textsuperscript{85} I also deny that the case envisioned plausibly involves greater benefit than an alternative future in which I live a life sparser in pleasure and desire-satisfactions but rich in person-involving goods requiring fairly sophisticated affective and cognitive capacities. I discuss these goods below.
evaluative outlooks that makes it possible to pose objections like these also allow for compelling responses to the objections. These objections presuppose (and plausibly so) the propriety of appealing to the space of possible valuational outlooks that an individual could have had, and those she might yet have. Idealized subjectivist views of well-being (e.g., Railton 1986a, 1986b) do leverage this possibility, but in a way that does not cleanly separate i) the assessment of what is good for an individual as she actually is, from ii) what could have been or would be good for her if she had been or were to be in some way different. But this direct inference of facts about (i) from facts about (ii) has counterintuitive consequences (implying, for example, that things I do not in fact want or care about at all are nonetheless good for me).

To bring this out more clearly, we can consider now Railton’s version of idealized subjectivism:

Let us then say that an individual’s intrinsic good consists in attainment of what he would in idealized circumstances want to want for its own sake—or, more accurately, to pursue for its own sake (for wanting is only one way of pursuing)—were he to assume the place of his actual self (Railton 1986a, 17).

Railton builds in that this idealized version of me takes account of much of my particularity as an individual, since it “holds fixed the individual’s non-belief properties, so that the contribution of these features to desire-formation would remain largely the same” (Railton 1986a, 20). Nonetheless, the view runs together (i) and (ii) above in an unacceptable way. Recall Railton’s resonance constraint:

[W]hat is intrinsically valuable for a person must have a connection with what he would find in some degree compelling or attractive, at least if he were rational and aware. It would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone’s good to imagine that it might fail in any such way to engage him (Railton 1986a 9, my emphasis).
Given the italicized caveat, Railton might claim that the objects of idealized desires still count as resonating with my actual self. But it seems to me that we should not accept this caveat in an account of resonance. I think it more plausible to preserve a distinction between what *actually* resonates with me and what *merely possibly* resonates with me. To the extent that my idealized self is different than my actual self, the objects of idealized desires resonate with my idealized self but *not* with me as I actually am.

A related difficulty for Railton’s view is the metaphysical status of contributions to my well-being that have idealized desires as parts. The satisfaction of such a desire is a relational state of affairs consisting in an *actually* obtaining object and a *possible but non-actual* desire for that object. While there is nothing downright incoherent about saying that such a relational state of affairs is good for me, I am inclined to instead take things at face value. A possible but non-actual desire is a possible but non-actual determinant of my well-being. But non-actual determinants of my well-being are not plausibly sufficient to ground *actual* benefits. Consider an analogy with pleasure: it is highly implausible that an experience benefits me just because it is a merely possible pleasure whose features *would* appeal to me if I had idealized tastes. I see no reason at all to seek experiences meeting this description.

I do, however, see a reason to bring myself to be more like my idealized self, insofar as this is understood to involve things going better for me (along with me still being recognizably myself). For this much plausibly follows from the concept of a prudential reason: I have prudential reason to do what is prudentially better for me. This gives my idealized a more constrained role in the determination of my good. Rather than sometimes himself serving as a determinant of my well-being, we can instead understand
my idealized self as a conceptual device stating conditions under which things would go better for me. In stating these conditions, this conceptual device states my structural reasons. Rather than giving idealization a direct role in determining my good, we can instead afford it the indirect role of expressing the reasons I have to be or to live differently.

Once we appropriate idealization to this more indirect role, it becomes clear that direct idealization is not necessary to deal with the various problem cases that have been posed for subjectivist views. Subjectivists need not feel embarrassed, for example, about their views implying that individuals with highly idiosyncratic desires have highly idiosyncratic conditions of well-being. Subjectivist views would only be properly embarrassed if they could not articulate rational shortcomings, from the standpoint of prudential reason, involved in the having of certain idiosyncratic desires. But they can do this perfectly well by pointing to our structural prudential reasons, which my appropriation of idealization is able to make sense of without taking on the problematic features of direct idealization.

By way of example, consider Rawls (1971, 432)’s grass-counter, an individual with profound mathematical abilities but “whose only pleasure is to count blades of grass in various geometrically shaped areas such as park squares and well-trimmed lawns.” This is the kind of example often supposed to cause subjectivist views of well-being embarrassment. Subjectivists, the thought goes, are committed to this seemingly deprived life nonetheless being best for the grass-counter. But subjectivists can deny this by pointing to the grass-counter’s structural reasons. Though the grass-counter only in fact derives pleasure from counting the grass, it is also plausibly true that he would be better
off finding enjoyment instead in the exercise of his profound mathematical abilities (or indeed, in any number of other pursuits). Psychologically plausible modifications to his tastes would lead him to find greater and more sustained appeal in the richer complexity of and variation in experience he would encounter in that activity. We get the same result if we modify the example to involve desire rather than pleasure.\textsuperscript{86} If these modifications to the grass-counter’s tastes or desires are psychologically possible for him, subjectivists can say that he has reason to cultivate them. To the extent that he does not, he is deprived of a life that would then be, by his own lights, better for him.

Of course, we might instead stipulate that the grass-counter is psychologically \textit{incapable} of deriving pleasure from or desiring for its own sake any other activity. The grass-counter can then have no structural reasons to change. But in this even more psychologically idiosyncratic telling of the case, it seems to me that Rawls has had the right result all along. Rawls says of the grass-counter that “if we allow that his nature is to enjoy this activity and not to enjoy any other, and that there is no feasible way to alter his condition, then surely a rational plan [of life] for him will center around this activity” (Rawls 1971, 432-433). If grass-counting is stipulated to really be the only life open to the grass-counter, then it does become plausible that she really does have reason to lead this life. It should, again, come as no surprise that idiosyncratic individuals have idiosyncratic conditions of well-being. To deny this is to deny the resonance requirement on theories of well-being, and that is too high a price to pay to save intuitive appearances.

\textsuperscript{86} Yao (2019, 118-121) claims of similar examples that they cannot be plausibly understood as involving desire, because some objects and activities are such that we cannot find intelligible why a human being would be attracted to them. But it is unclear why attraction to an object or activity must be intelligible to others in order to count as desired by the one so attracted, and so as potentially benefitting her on my account. So long as the attraction or appeal of an object or activity is intelligible \textit{from the inside}, where this is understood in terms of phenomenal experience, I can see no reason to exclude such objects and activities in this way. See also Lin (2016a), who offers a related line of argument.
Notice too that, if grass-counting really is the only life open to an individual, grass-counting on that account must be the best life for her. This follows from its being the only one she can lead. An objectivist could rightly claim that this fact is still lamentable: things would go better for this individual if other lives were open to her. But a subjectivist of my stripe can agree: things would go better for this individual if others lives were open to her, in particular, those lives consisting in more and more potent affective goods. The objectivist might then claim that it is not the absence of affective goods that explains why the grass-counter’s situation is lamentable. Instead, the objectivist might say, is the absence of goods like love, friendship, and virtue. But this rejoinder is only convincing if the goodness of these goods for their subject is not plausibly explained in terms of affect. I argue in the sections that follow that it can be so explained.

8. The Relationship Between Pleasure and Desire

Before undertaking that task, however, a comparatively simpler employment of structural reasons is in order. This employment of the concept provides a base case, setting the stage for the more complicated appeals to structural reasons in the next section.

One kind of structural reason, Helmian in character, can be brought out by considering the relationship between pleasure and desire. My previous two chapters defended the claim that pleasure and desire (of the kinds relevant to well-being) are affective states. We are now in a position to consider the justificatory relationship between these two state-types: how one provides prudential reason for the other, given certain conditions.
Mill not only argued for a justificatory relationship between pleasure and desire, but grounded this relationship in a metaphysical one. He writes:

desiring a thing and finding it pleasant, aversion to it and thinking of it as painful, are phenomena entirely inseparable, or rather two parts of the same phenomenon; in strictness of language, two different modes of naming the same psychological fact: that to think of an object as desirable (unless for the sake of its consequences), and to think of it as pleasant, are one and the same thing; and that to desire anything, except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant, is a physical and metaphysical impossibility (Mill [1861] 1969, 237).

While these claims do not hold for my accounts of pleasure and desire, it is difficult to deny that Mill has a more general insight to offer here: any account of pleasure and desire should affirm an intimate connection between the two. My account implies such a connection.

I have said that desiring that p, in the sense of desire relevant to well-being, is an affective state in which what presents positively in experience is p. Suppose now that I have, concurrent with my desire that p, an occurrent belief that p obtains. Now I have not only a mental state consisting in p being attractive to me (the desire), but also a representational state of p as obtaining (the belief). Suppose further that my belief is a phenomenal experience whose features represent p, as some (though perhaps not all) occurrent beliefs surely do. Given that p is, by hypothesis, attractive to me, I will (other things being equal) on that basis also find phenomenal features representing p attractive. And for my belief to possess phenomenal features that present attractively to me is for it be not merely a belief, but also a pleasure.87

87 The role of belief in this argument is not to claim that we need such a belief to have a reason; rather, having such a belief is causally required for us to experience pleasure in response to the fulfillment of a desire. We have a reason to experience pleasure either way, but cannot respond to it without belief or knowledge of the satisfaction. I discuss the significance of this later in this chapter in the course of laying out the role of knowledge in my theory of well-being.
Moreover, my pleasurable belief representing p obtaining is an endorsement by me of p, and thereby of my own desire that p. Positive affect colors my experience by picking out features of the experience that, as representational features, aim at correspondence to the thing represented. Consider, for example, my desire that my philosophical ideas be well-received. If I believe that this desire has been fulfilled, I mentally represent the state of affairs consisting in my ideas in fact being well-received. Because this state of affairs is affectively appealing to me, I am apt to also find the features of my experiencing representing this state of affairs affectively appealing, given that this experience stands in for the appealing state of affairs. My belief is then also a pleasure.

My desire that p makes all of this rational for me. It would be an inconsistency in my self-given standards of valuation to find p attractive while not finding attractive an experience constitutively aimed at standing in for p by virtue of being a representation of p. This explains why, when an individual experiences no pleasure upon obtaining the object of her desire and knowing (or even just believing) that she has obtained it, we are apt to doubt that she really desired it at all. While there is no logical inconsistency here, there is an inconsistency of valuation. Because people are not often so directly inconsistent in their valuations, situations like these lead us to doubt instead whether the thing obtained is the same thing as what was antecedently desired. If, alternatively, we are sure that what is obtained is in fact what was antecedently desired, we are then inclined to doubt whether the individual really appreciates (really knows or believes) that the desired state of affairs obtains. The appropriateness of these typical reactions on our
part make plausible that it really is valuationally inconsistent to feel no pleasure in response to obtaining what one wants and knowing (or believing) that one has.

This sheds some light on the hypothetical anhedonic person I discussed in Chapter 3. While not wholly devoid of possible contributions to well-being, her life seemed quite deprived relative to a similar that did involve pleasure. We are now in a position to explain why. A life deprived of all pleasure is a life deprived of one of the key elements required for cultivating, endorsing, and reaffirming one’s valuational outlooks. It is a life deprived of the possibility of fully rich Helmian constellations of affective, in which affective states such as pleasure take on greater subjective significance in virtue of being the centerpieces for some constellations and the supporting states of others. This impoverishes, by extension, the affective life that one would yet possess if anaffective, robbing it both of states suitable as centerpieces of affective constellations and of important parts of the background support structure that the valuational outlooks of psychologically typical subjects include.

We have now elucidated the connection in one direction, the direction in which desire-satisfaction rationalizes pleasure. What about the other direction, that in which pleasure rationalizes desire? The parallel claim in that direction is that the fact that a state of affairs would involve pleasure on an individual’s part thereby makes it rational for her to desire it. For this parallel claim, a parallel argument can be given. I have said that pleasure is an affective state in which what presents positively in experience is the phenomenal features of that very experience. It would be an inconsistency in my self-given standards of valuation to find some phenomenal features attractive but not find attractive the state of affairs consisting in my experiencing those features. And to find
that state of affairs attractive is just to desire it. This explains why (other things being equal), when a state of affairs would involve pleasure on an individual’s part but she is indifferent to this fact (i.e., she does not find that state of affairs attractive or appealing), we are apt to doubt whether she really believes that the state of affairs would involve pleasure on her part. There is once again no logical inconsistency here, but there is an inconsistency of valuation.

9. Purportedly Objective Goods

With this conceptual machinery in place, we can now turn to Affectivism’s explanation of the intrinsic goodness of various ostensibly objective goods for their subjects. I focus on person-involving goods: goods involving affective states in which what presents appealingly or attractively is a person or some essential feature of a person. I discuss the other-regarding goods of love, friendship, and virtue, as well as the self-regarding good of self-respect.

We can begin this task by recalling Fletcher (2013)’s objective list theory of well-being. Fletcher offers the following list of objective goods: achievement, friendship, happiness, pleasure, self-respect, virtue. Each of these goods, he claims, essentially involves a pro-attitude. Fletcher does not provide a detailed account of how pro-attitudes figure in each of the goods, but such an account readily suggests itself for several of the goods. Achievement requires a pro-attitude toward what is achieved. Friendship

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88 Because it is not a person-involving good, I set achievement aside for purposes of the analysis that follows. But Affectivism’s conception of the value of achievement for its subject is straightforward enough: achievement requires an affective pro-attitude one an individual’s part toward what is achieved, and achievement thereby benefits her in proportion to the strength of this attitude. While the value simpliciter of achievements may be a function of further of its features (for a defense of this claim, see Bradford 2015), their intrinsic value for those who achieve is plausible explainable solely in terms of positive affect.
involves a pro-attitude toward the one befriended. Self-respect involves a pro-attitude toward oneself. And virtue involves a pro-attitude either toward morality as such, or toward particular acts or subjects involved in a moral choice situation.  

In including on his list only goods essentially involving pro-attitudes, Fletcher claims to avoid the objection that objective list views fail to meet the resonance constraint. Fletcher’s strategy is to make favorable resonance itself part of each of the various ostensibly objective goods on his list. As I argued in Chapter 2, this strategy fails to make use of resonance as an explanatory resource, instead relegating it to a mere common feature of the bearers of well-being, one that plays no role explaining the goodness of these goods for their subject. I argued that, like the later G.E. Moore’s view regarding goodness simpliciter, Fletcher’s view and other views like it face an objection of “cosmic coincidence” as a result.  

Affectivism, I now argue, can explain the goodness of various purportedly objective goods on Fletcher’s and similar objective lists. In doing so, Affectivism reaps the benefits of comporting with ostensibly objectivist intuitions about well-being without taking on the drawbacks of objectivist theories, namely, that they imply either the possibility of individuals being alienated from their personal good or an inexplicable cosmic coincidence between what resonates and what is good for individuals.

89 I set aside the remaining goods, pleasure and happiness. Fletcher thinks that pleasure essentially involves a pro-attitude because he accepts a desire-based theory of pleasure, a view that I have problematized. In the case of happiness, I am not certain what an attitudinal theory of happiness is supposed to involve. If the object of attitudinal happiness is the conditions of one’s life, then I think it plausibly equivalent to affective desire. Alternatively, one might take happiness to consist simply in the possession of various goods: either the other ostensibly objective goods on his list, or the subjective ones whose existence I have defended. On any of these construals, happiness is not an independent contributor to well-being, but instead involves the possession of one or more goods that are contributors.

90 On the idea of “cosmic coincidence,” see again Bedke (2009).
My strategy is to understand the relevant goods as involving positive affect, and seeing the object of that affect as structuring it in such a way as to give these goods the importance we intuitively accord them. Love, friendship, virtue, and self-respect each involve a robust, resilient constellation of affective states suitably connected to an individual’s structural reasons. Understanding the goods in this way allows Affectivism to explain ostensibly objectivist intuitions that these goods always benefit their possessors without departing from the explanatory resources of subjectivism about well-being.

9.1. Love

Consider first the good of love, understood to involve loving another person who reciprocates this attitude. Love so understood does not often appear explicitly on objective list theories of well-being (though see Rice 2013), and with good reason: the goodness it involves for its subject is plausibly accounted for in subjectivist terms. But I consider it here in order to bring out some distinctive features of affective pro-attitudes whose objects are persons qua their distinctive features as persons, and because it figures crucially in friendship, which does frequently appear in objective list theories, and indeed, perhaps in all person-involving goods.

I should note at the outset that I do not intend to provide an exhaustive conception of love and defend this conception from all plausible objections. That task would be a project all its own. Instead, my purpose is to show how Affectivism can vindicate the ostensible importance of these kinds of relationships in human life, given a plausible

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91 In order to simplify the discussion, I limit my analysis to pairs of individuals. But nothing about this analysis obviously precludes its application to groups of more than two individuals.
basic construal of what they involve that is informed by leading theories of the goods in question. My claim is that, whatever the complete, correct theory of love turns out to be, the goodness of love for its subject can be captured in the subjectivist terms of Affectivism.

On one prominent view of love, it involves an attitude of robust concern for the beloved (Taylor 1976, Helm 2017). In particular, it involves robust concern for her interests, understood as her personal good. This concern is plausibly construed as an affective attitude in which what appeals is another person, qua her status as subject of a personal good. In other words, to love another is to find her personal good appealing in itself. In order for the attitude involved to amount to robust concern, however, we plausibly require the additional stipulation that this attitude is backed by a robust constellation of related attitudes and dispositions to favorable experience. Genuine love is not fleeting and shallow, but involves instead a stable and deep constellation of valuational standards of the kind that Helmian import involves.\(^\text{92}\) Love requires that I care about the good of another, where this is understood to involve my being sensitive to changes in her good and responding appropriately, and to my being prepared to promote or protect her good when opportunities arise. It also includes my desiring that she do the same for me. Love without this broader valuational backing is not plausibly love at all, but mere desire. And while a (fulfilled) affective desire that an individual’s personal good be promoted or protected also contributes to the well-being of the desirer, given the truth of Affectivism, it does not plausibly contribute nearly as much as the more robust good of love.

\(^{92}\) Helm (2009; 2010) accords import a similar role in his own account of love.
The related but distinct *bestowal theory* of love understands it as a bestowal of value on the beloved that thereby *justifies* robust concern (Helm 2017, §4.2). In offering a conferral conception of the value involved in affective attitudes, Affectivism is well-positioned not only to account for this bestowal of value, but also to show how the insights of the robust concern theory and the bestowal theory can be combined. On the Affectivist construal of the robust concern theory I gave above, love also involves the bestowal of subject-relative value due to the way in which affective attitudes confer value on their objects. In this way, Affectivism captures what is most plausible in the two theories.

On Velleman (1999)’s rival *appraisal* theory of love, loving involves recognizing and appropriately responding to the status of another as an end in themselves, where this is understood in terms of a more or less orthodox Kantian conception of such status. Velleman appeals in particular to recognition of the value of the beloved, an understanding that might seem to require an attribution of *objective* value. But we can preserve the crucial insight of the appraisal theory without construing things this way. *Recognizing* the status of another as an end in themselves in the descriptive sense of their possessing valuational standards of their own, is not itself an evaluative judgment, but simply a judgment of fact. And the *appropriateness* of responding with a particular attitude can be understood with reference not to independent standards of value, but instead with reference to an individual’s own structural reasons, which include reasons for the individual to have certain affective states. The idea of loving as involving appraisal is not anathema to Affectivism, so long as we are careful to understand the form

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93 Helm takes the foremost proponent of this theory to be Singer (1991; 1994; 2009).
94 Helm (2017) gives Velleman’s theory this name.
95 Anderson (1993, 3-5) defends a similar view.
of appraisal involved as deriving from the appraiser’s own valuational standards and structural reasons, rather than as invoking independent standards of value.

Another leading conception of love is the union theory (termed this by Helm 2017). This theory is rather different than the ones canvassed so far, and is not obviously incompatible with any of them. Instead, it can be taken as complementing them by offering a metaphysical account of the consequences of love for our personal goods. We might be tempted to think of love as a relation between two people, but the union theory has it that love somehow involves the dissolution of two into a union of one. And while we might yet be inclined to take this kind of talk as metaphorical, some proponents seem to think of the union as a quite radical and metaphysically robust one. Nozick (1989) defends the union view that love involves two individuals coming to constitute a “we” in which the distinction between our interests disappears.\footnote{Nozick credits Solomon (1981) with the idea of love creating a “we.”} We do this, he thinks, by i) desiring to form a “we” and ii) desiring that the another reciprocates this desire themselves. When a “we” is formed, Nozick says, this “new entity is created by a new web of relationships between [the lovers] which makes them no longer separate” (Nozick 1989, 70). There are surely some intuitive difficulties with this view. How can I desire, in a literal way, of another individual, under the guise of them as another individual, the dissolution of both their individuality (given their status as part of the object of the desire) and my own (given my status as the one who has the desire)? But the core insights of this view of love are plausible enough: i) the coming to be a new thing (the “we”), and ii) a loss of distinction to some extent between the interests of those in the love relationship.
Affectivism offers compelling explanations of these apparent features of love. In order to explain these features of love, Affectivism can characterize the attitude of loving as follows: an affective pro-attitude in which what appeals or attracts is another person, *qua* the distinctive feature of persons consisting in their possessing a personal good. This is the lesson of the robust concern conception of love: concern for the beloved takes the form of concern for her good. That I have this attitude toward another *qua* their own good confers value for *me* on what is good for *them*. This is the lesson of the bestowal conception of love: in bestowing value on the good of another, I make it part of my own good. The union theory gives us a clearer metaphysical picture of the consequences of this: the distinction between our interests is weakened in the sense that what contributes to the well-being of one of the individuals involved now contributes to that of the other by fulfilling the pro-attitude that the other has toward the well-being of the one. The union theory also supplies a clear account of why the resultant value for those concerned is intrinsic: one only counts as loving with reference to the beloved and the *we* that is thereby constituted when loving is reciprocated. My attitude only counts as loving with reference to my beloved and her possible reciprocation of my love, such that I only possess the good of love when it is so reciprocated.

Fulfilling an affective attitude toward the beloved is not the only way in which the reciprocation of love contributes to the goodness of love for its subject. It is no accident, I think, that we often speak of loving relationships as involving emotional *attachment*. This metaphor describes the nature of the relation involved between emotion and intentional object. I prefer to speak of *affective entanglement* or *intermingling*. Affectivism implies that reciprocated love has a special status because it involves two people possessing
interlocking constellations of affective states, responsive to and mutually shaped by those of the other.\footnote{97 See Baier (1991, 444) on the related notion of emotional interdependence.} What I call \textit{shaping} refers to changes in the structure and content of our valuations that are warranted by the affective states of another person. Shaping is a consequence of the entanglement of individuals’ personal goods emphasized by the union theory of love. The partial dependence of my good on my beloved’s good makes it the case that her actual and possible affective states give me structural reasons.

A clear example of shaping in action is familial love, especially between parents and children. When a child is suitably mature to have the attitude of love toward a parent \textit{qua} possessor of a personal good, one manifestation of this is the parent’s valuations holding appeal for the child in virtue of the appeal they involve for the beloved parent. This appeal provides warrant (\textit{some} degree of warrant) for the child to take onboard valuational standards imparted by a parent, thereby finding appeal in a parent’s vocation, traditions, and values. Of course, a child may have countervailing reason not to share in each and every relevant valuation: she may be unsuited to or uninspired by the vocation of her parents, she may find their traditions stifling rather than uplifting, and she may find some of their values incompatible with her own as she develops a set of values of her own. But the valuations of a beloved parent provide the child with \textit{one} source of reasons to onboard these valuations, especially when parents aim to impart these valuations for the sake of the child herself, out of their love for her.

Parents too have their personal goods shaped by those of their children. Friends and acquaintances of mine who are parents, including those who had little or no antecedent desire to have children, report that becoming a parent involves a great change in evaluational outlook, one occasioned by attention to the personal good of their
children. In virtue of their love for their children, parents finds new things appealing, such as fulfilling the child’s needs and reveling in the child’s successes. I claim that they are rational in doing so: the love a parent has for their child and the intermingling of personal goods that this involves gives the parent prudential reason to have these responses.98

Shaping depends on love’s reciprocation because reciprocation makes possible what Anderson (1993, 151) calls a *shared life*. While Anderson offers marriage as a paradigmatic example of a shared life, it is plausible that all loving relationships involve shared life to some degree. The extent to which individuals live shared lives will be a function of how many aspects of their lives are shared, and for how long, with long and healthy marriages serving as a kind of upper bound. Romantic loving relationships of any kind, then, plausibly also involve shaping to some extent. Any such relationship will involve responsiveness to emotional and other needs of the beloved in order to count as genuine concern for her interests, and will also involve shared enjoyments and mutual desires.

Consider also the way in which romantic relationships make new things appealing in virtue of their being appealing to the beloved. My beloved’s appreciation of something may bring me to see it as appealing, and not just by *causing* me to appreciate it by *exposing* me to it. Instead, her appreciation itself warrants mine, given the role of her appreciation in her good and my attitude toward her good. Interpersonal intimacy over time reveals the structure of others’ valuations to us, and we often find these valuations appealing in their own right or in connection with their being the valuations of a beloved.

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98 This is compatible with its also being warranted by *moral obligations* that parents have toward their children, which are not plausibly conditional on that parent’s attitude of love toward the child.
We often in this way take on various of the tastes (in food, music, intellectual pursuits, and so on), hobbies, aspirations, and ideals of romantic and other beloveds. Similarly, the fact of a beloved disliking something may result in its losing its appeal for me, too. The entanglement of our goods makes this a rational response. And this entanglement makes essential reference to affect; it is only intelligible in terms of my affective attitude toward my beloved’s good. Such responses are therefore most plausibly understood not as caused by love, but as themselves being involved in the loving relationship. They are not merely part of what love brings, but part of what it is.

Facts like these about the particular ways in which the affective states of two people can form interlocking and mutually shaping constellations imply facts about the degree to which these two people fit one another, in the sense of being suitable romantic partners. In this way, another person can be intrinsically good for you not because they are intrinsically good, in a way admitting of some explanation totally independent of facts about you, but instead because of how your valuational outlooks do or could interlock in this way. Of course, it is an objective fact that another individual fits you, in the sense that there are better and worse fits independently of our beliefs about the matter, but their betterness or worseness depends on the individual as the one whose valuational standards figure in facts about fit. The value is thoroughly subjective in the way that matters.

9.2. Friendship

Friendship appears on Fletcher’s list, as well as those of Finnis (1980) and Murphy (2001). Here again, it is not my aim to exhaustively adjudicate between rival conceptions

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99 See Rosati (2006) on the related notion of an individual’s good fitting her, and on the ways in which this is itself analogous to loving relationships.
of the good in question. I aim only to show how Affectivism can make sense of important claims made about the good, and show that it can do from within a subjectivist framework.

I have in mind here Aristotle’s *perfect or complete* friendship, not friendships of pleasure or convenience (whose goodness for those involved is plainly instrumental). Aristotle recognizes the centrality of love for this form of friendship, claiming that it “seems to consist more in loving than being loved” (Aristotle 1999, 128). As a species of love, friendship involves concern for the other’s own sake, with a requirement that the concern be reciprocated (Jeske 2016, 235).

Ward understands Aristotle as affirming different kinds of fits for different forms of friendship: *like-mindedness* among political friends (Ward 2016, 105) and *complementarity* in friendship between husbands and wives (Ward 2016, 125-126). Without taking on these particular commitments, we can recognize a more general truth that they suggest: friendship involves affective entanglement of the valuations of the friends, such that, as with love, some people fit one another better than others. And as in the case of love, this fit can evolve over time. Interpersonal intimacy reveals the valutational standards of friends to one another, allowing them to respond in the way characteristic of the mutual shaping I described above. Friends shape one another’s relevant constellations of affective states, such that friends can grow together and *challenge* one another. By the lights of Affectivism, we have structural reason to desire the reciprocation of friendship, as with love, because it is this reciprocation that allows us to shape and in turn be shaped by the good of others. This mutual shaping, and the
reasons to which it gives rise, plausibly capture what is expressed in the idea of friends as other selves (Jeske 2016, 239). For example, a friend with whom I share a similar valuational outlook will enjoy similar pursuits, like doing philosophy, such that our friendship will deepen and strengthen our mutual appreciation of this pursuit. In this way, we mutually reinforce one another’s outlooks in a way analogous to how Helmian constellations of background states do so in the intrapersonal case. On the other hand, a friend with a quite different valuational outlook than mine may bring me to appreciate some pursuit that previously held no appeal for me, such as, say, political engagement. In seeing this activity as part of the good of another whose good appeals to me because they are my friend, I am then apt to see the appeal of the activity myself and potentially carve out a role for it in my own life.

Jeske (2016, 237) claims that hedonists and desire-satisfactionists cannot affirm a necessary truth about friendship’s effects on well-being, since it is a contingent matter whether friendship involves pleasures or desire-satisfaction. One might wish to extend this objection to any subjectivist theory of well-being, including Affectivism. But this move is too quick, and it is also unclear that the objection holds even for hedonism and desire-satisfactionism taken on their own. Friendship is plausibly understood to constitutively involve pleasure and desire-satisfaction. A relationship that does not involve shared pleasures and desire-satisfactions in mutually desired pursuits does not plausibly count as a friendship; some threshold of these mutually shared goods must be met in order for a relationship to be a friendship rather than mere acquaintance. And

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100 See also Brink (1990), who Jeske credits with the idea that friends are other selves in a quite literal sense specifiable in terms of degree of psychological connectedness.
friendship involves an affective pro-attitude toward the good of another that is fulfilled in virtue of being reciprocated. If the attitude is not reciprocated, what one has is not friendship. So there are positive contributions to well-being essentially involved in being in a friendship, given the truth of Affectivism.

This does not go all the way to addressing the worry, but it is nonetheless significant. It shows that friendships always involve some intrinsic benefit, independent of their particular content. You might still worry that some friendships or loving relationships could be intrinsically bad for individuals because one of the friends suffers grave and sustained misfortune, thereby harming the other by frustrating the other’s concern for the personal good of the one who suffers the misfortune. But it remains plausible that possession of friendship and love will nearly always make a positive contribution on balance, because the attitudes that these involve are directed toward the good of another, and most lives are plausibly worth living (where this can be understood as being net positive where well-being is concerned). Those lives that are not worth living will presumably involve monumental suffering, inability to pursue the objects of one’s desires, sustained social isolation, or other serious forms of deprivation. The character of such lives are thus such as to make the formation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships very difficult; part of what makes them deprived lives is that the bads they involve are not only serious intrinsic bads, but also serious instrumental bads that stand in the way of forming robust personal relationships. Even if there are some examples of friendships and loving relationships that are, on the whole, intrinsically bad for individuals, these will still involve intrinsic benefit. It will simply be the case that
the intrinsic detriment outweighs these benefits. But to outweigh a benefit is not to erase it, so even in these cases it will remain true that friendship involves intrinsic benefit.

I take this show that Affectivism can vindicate what is worth vindicating in the objectivist’s intuition that certain goods are always good for those who possess them. For it is plausible that nothing would count as friendship without possessing these features (including, crucially, affective experience itself and its mutual shaping). As Fletcher claims, friendship essentially involves a distinctive kind of pro-attitude. And it plausibly also involves various other affect-involving goods, produced by shaping. Someone who denied this would be offering a radically revisionary view of friendship. I would not for that reason reject such a view out of hand. But notice this: if such a view were correct, then commonsensical, ordinary intuitions about friendship are mistaken. And if that is true, it is no embarrassment to Affectivism that it cannot explain these intuitions, and objectivism loses much of its appeal.

The goods of love and friendship bring out something important about the nature of complex person-involving goods: only determinants with a certain structure can explain certain kinds of contributions. For example, one cannot love or befriend one’s car in a way involving robust concern for the well-being of the car, in the sense of well-being consisting in things being good or bad for the car in my sense. Since the car lacks subjectivity, it lacks well-being in this sense. But this is just the sense of well-being that figures ineliminably in the affective-involving goods we call love and friendship. Neither can the car reciprocate love or friendship in the way required to secure the mutual shaping that occurs when two persons stand in these relations. So the essential objects of love and friendship (persons) explain why they have the significance for well-being that
they do, especially because the special character of their object (persons) explains how they come to possess reciprocity conditions in virtue of involving the kind of affective entanglement consisting in the mutual shaping of one another’s goods.

9.3. Virtue

We can turn next to virtue, which appears on Fletcher’s list as well as Parfit (1984)’s. Because there are as many conceptions of virtue as there are conceptions of the content of moral normativity, I will not provide a comprehensive account of virtue, but only a minimal conception that any plausible conception of moral normativity will involve.

On this minimal conception, a necessary condition on virtue is that it involves concern for the well-being of others. This follows from some plausible minimal assumptions about morality: first, that it is person-regarding in the sense that a large portion of our moral reasons stem from the effects of actions or policies on persons, and second, that a large portion of the relevant effects are effects on individuals’ well-being (the benefits or harms that these actions or polices bring about). This is plausible on a conception of virtue on which it involves loving the good (Hurka 1992). Because a quite sizeable portion of the good consists in the personal goods of particular individuals, loving the good implies positive regard for the particular goods of particular individuals. Indeed, it involves a kind of loving, though one that does not obviously involve any essential condition of reciprocity.

If Affectivism about well-being is correct, this implies that morality involves (as at least a significant component) the morally salient affective states of other persons and
the goods and bads that these determine.\footnote{Of course, one might point out that certain conceptions of moral normativity, such as strict Kantianism, leave little room for feeling in moral motivation, and hence also in their conceptions of good moral character. But strict Kantian conceptions of morality are rejected as implausible for this very reason.} A virtuous person will possess pro-social attitudes that, given the truth of Affectivism, benefit her. Part of what is involved in being virtuous is the having of affective sensibilities that align with the standards of morality. Put differently, to be virtuous is to onboard the standards of morality into one’s own evaluative outlook, where this outlook is of course understood affectively. So virtue requires the apprehension of the morally salient interests of others. And to genuinely have an affective pro-attitude toward the interests of others is, as the cases of love and friendship show, to in some measure make those interests one’s own, such that one benefits when that individual benefits.

Furthermore, virtue plausibly requires not only the reliable ability to apprehend the morally salient interests of others, but also \textit{effectiveness} in promoting or protecting those interests when doing so is morally required. So virtue not only requires onboarding the standards of morality, and hence onboarding (to some extent) the interests of others in relevant choice situations, but also being able to live up to these onboarded standards. And this implies that no one can be virtuous without thereby benefitting from it, since virtue implies \textit{successful} promotion of something one finds appealing. While this does not ensure that any virtuous person is better off than any vicious one, it does imply that virtue intrinsically benefits its possessor. And it is this latter claim that objectivists typically make.
9.4. Self-Respect

Another member of Fletcher’s list, *self-respect*, is also a person-involving good. Here, however, the person involved is *oneself*. Rawls (1971) understands self-respect not as intrinsically good for individuals, but instead as a *primary good*: an all-purpose means that has significant instrumental value in the living out of one’s conception of the good, whatever the particular content of that conception. On Rawls’ view, self-respect has two aspects:

First of all… it includes a person’s sense of his own value, his secure conviction that his conception of his good, his plan of life, is worth carrying out. And second, self-respect implies a confidence in one’s ability, so far as it is within one’s power, to fulfill one’s intentions. When we feel that our plans are of little value, we cannot pursue them with pleasure or take delight in their execution. Nor plagued by failure and self-doubt can we continue in our endeavors. It is clear then why self-respect is a primary good. Without it nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism (Rawls 1971, 440).

Rawls’ designation of self-respect as a primary good is well-motivated. Both of its aspects plainly have substantial instrumental value for living out a conception of the good. But focusing exclusively on these benefits occludes the intrinsic value that self-respect also plausibly has for individuals who possess it.

This can be seen more clearly by considering a related conception of self-respect that takes its initial cues from Rawls. Anderson and Honneth (2005, 132) offer a further specification of self-respect as involving affect:

If one takes respect (including self-respect) to have, as its object, an agent’s authority to raise and defend claims as a person with equal standing, then self-respect can be seen as the affectively laden self-conception that underwrites a view of oneself as the legitimate source of reasons for acting.
Anderson and Honneth’s talk of authority to raise and defend claims has an intersubjective flavor: raising and defending claims is an activity that we carry out with others. Crucially, however, they understand each individual’s authority to do this as relating to their status as an individual source of reasons. This comports with Affectivism, on which an individual’s evaluative authority consists in her power of setting the standards that constitute the conditions of her own good. But we still need an account of how this renders self-respect intrinsically good for the individuals who possess it.

Affectivism understands self-respect as an affective pro-attitude whose object is oneself qua the source of one’s own good. Self-respect involves endorsing who you are: in particular, the part of who you are consisting in the self-given standards constituting the conditions of your personal good. It involves finding your own valuational standards appealing, and this stance is itself a valuation, and hence itself apt to figure in an affect-involving good. Its value for an individual is plainly intrinsic, since it involves positive valuation of one’s own employment of the capacity for valuation itself. This suggests that self-respect has a special status among the goods I have described. Self-respect may be seen a good that structures all of the other goods in a life, serving as a second-order valuation of all of one’s first-order valuations. In doing so, it provides us with additional structural reason to realize the standards that we set: reasons of authenticity to cultivate in ourselves the capacities to live up to these standards, and reasons of optimization to shape our standards to accord with our actual and plausibly accessible possible abilities. In this way, self-respect can be seen as involving our shaping

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102 This idea is structurally identical, and similar in content, to the Kantian idea of valuing one’s own rational agency as end in itself.
103 I thank Jacob Mills for making this suggestion to me.
ourselves, as compared with our being shaped by others. Importantly, however, self-respect (when possessed) more strongly favors reasons of authenticity than it does reasons of optimization. Because the fundamental object of my self-respect is me as I actually am, self-respect counsels caution in changing myself. When I possess self-respect, changing myself too much or too rapidly threatens my possession of this good. And that is an additional reason to refrain from effecting such changes, over and above the considerations related to identity adduced earlier. The good of self-respect thereby places a further constraint on reasons of optimization, countervailing reasons of optimization that my acting upon would secure for me greater pleasure, desire-satisfaction, or other affective goods, but the possession of which would cause me to lose self-respect.

Self-respect of this kind is in fact a form of loving consisting in self-love. And, we can note, such loving is always reciprocated. In loving oneself, it follows necessarily that one is loved by one’s beloved. This renders self-respect unique among the person-involving goods that I have canvassed. Self-respect does not depend in any direct way on the valuations of other persons, and is on that score a good whose possession is more secure in the face of the characteristic contingencies that interpersonal relationships involve.

9.5. Knowledge

Thought it does not appear on Fletcher’s list, knowledge figures in several other objective list theories (Finnis 1980, Parfit 1984, Murphy 2001, Rice 2013). I want to briefly address some lingering questions about the role of knowledge in my theory, which I am
now finally in a position to answer. Affectivism implies that knowledge is not itself intrinsically good for individuals, but also that it plays so great a role in many contributions to well-being that it is easily mistaken for possessing such status. Knowledge of which states of affairs relevant to our good obtain (or not) allows us to respond, as I illustrated earlier in this chapter in my account of the relationship between pleasure and desire. The same is true of the purportedly objective goods I have described. This is an important feature of knowledge given the truth of any theory of well-being, but it has special significance for Affectivism due to the role of structural reasons in the theory.

Knowing what has befallen those we love (including ourselves) tells us which structural reasons in the space of possibility have been realized or closed off, and thereby allows us to respond appropriately by appreciating which further structural reasons are now open to us as a result. The linear structure of life offers the possibility of a kind of continuing dialogue with the world, with our valuational standards as the language of it. A lack of such knowledge is like a conversational utterance that one fails to hear, or mishears: it is still part of the conversation, but can play no further role in the conversation unless and until it does come to be properly appreciated. While a lack of knowledge does not negate the existence of certain contributions to well-being (e.g., desire-satisfactions of which we are unaware), it renders such contributions impossible to incorporate them into the larger superstructure of our valuational outlook (by, at minimum, taking pleasure in the realization that they have occurred). And this renders most of these contributions comparatively insignificant relative to the goods and bads of which we are aware and to which we thus can respond.
Though Affectivism cannot affirm the intrinsic goodness of knowledge for individuals, it does justice to the thought that knowledge plays a deep and even indispensable role in rendering lives high in well-being. The role of knowledge in allowing us to recognize and respond to our ever-changing structural reasons gives knowledge a particularly prominent role in Affectivism, more robust than the role it is accorded by various other subjectivist theories.

10. Conclusion

In affording an essential role to affect in various purportedly objective goods, Affectivism provides a way of vindicating the idea that they are intrinsically good for all who possess them. Affectivism implies that everyone has structural reasons of optimization grounded in their own possible affective states to seek these goods, for they would be better off if they possessed them. This is true of each of us whether or not we believe it to be so, and whether or not we now in fact care about such goods. In this way, Affectivism’s appropriation of Helmian import, as a way of making explanatory use of the possible affective states an individual might have, allows it to affirm the modal robustness of the contributions of these goods to well-being, given what these goods involve. This allows it to secure the objective list theorist’s most plausible verdicts regarding the goodness of these goods for all who possess them, without taking on the problematic features of objectivism. Having shown that Affectivism can make sense of many of the intuitive narrow-equilibric judgments usually thought to belong proprietarily to objective list theories, and having derived these judgments from a suitably independent conception of the nature of well-being, I submit Affectivism as preferable to objective list
theories. Given that Affectivism both has this feature and combines the core insights of hedonism and desire-satisfactionism, I submit it as preferable to these theories as well.

Theorists of well-being often take the goodness for their subjects of pleasure, desire-satisfaction, and other goods to admit of no deeper explanation. I have rejected this widespread claim, arguing instead that we can in fact provide a deeper explanation by appealing to affective experience. This appeal to affective experience allows my theory to employ genuinely wide Rawlsian wide reflective equilibrium in a way that few other theories do. The explanatory appeal to affect provides an independent check both on judgments about particular cases and on principles that systematize these judgments. In developing and defending Affectivism in this way, I have offered both a plausible substantive theory of well-being and a powerful methodological approach to the questions that make up philosophy of well-being.
References


