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Well-Being, Authority, and Worth

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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WELL-BEING, AUTHORITY, AND WORTH

Monograph

by

Steve Michel Hébert

Graduate Program in Philosophy

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

Theories of well-being give an account of what it is for persons to fare well or to live prudentially valuable lives. I divide the theoretical landscape based on the position that theories accord to schedules of concerns. A schedule of concerns is the loose program that specifies the objects that engage the subject's active interest, attention, and care. Objective theories hold that the objects of one's concerns alone determine one's well-being. Subjective theories hold that one's concerns alone determine one's well-being. I assess each set of theories for descriptive adequacy and find that each runs into difficulty.

Subjective theories confront the problem of worth. They imply that one can fare well despite the fact that the objects of one's concerns are not objectively valuable. Critics object that the latter claim does not cohere well with some pre-analytic beliefs about well-being. Not all the objects in one's schedule of concerns are on equal axiological footing. Meanwhile, objective theories confront the problem of authority. They imply that, provided the objects to which one relates are independently valuable, one can fare well despite the fact that one does not endorse the conditions of one's life. This alienates welfare subjects from their well-being. Finally, each set of theories imply that objective goods and schedules of concerns on their own do not contribute to well-being. I argue that this claim is counter-intuitive. I call this the double bind problem.

My research shows that we can address the problem of authority, the problem of worth, and the double bind problem by defending an accommodating view of well-being as endorsing worthy goods. This is a hybrid account of well-

being that tries to take seriously the intuition that well-being has both a subjective and an objective part. The endorsement condition captures the subjective part of well-being; the worth condition captures the objective part of well-being. My considered view is that, in central cases, one fares well at a time when one endorses worthy goods.

Keywords

Ethics, Well-Being, Authority, Worth, Subjectivism, Objectivism, Sumner, Parfit, Darwall, Dworkin.

Acknowledgements

This project was born on an early Wednesday morning. John Thorp was listening patiently, his hands in his lap, while I struggled through what Epicurus might have thought of well-being. I am grateful to John for showing me that some discussions are old wine in new bottles. Some wines get better with age. I had the good fortune of chatting with him several times as the project evolved. I have yet to meet anyone who takes greater pleasure in mentoring graduate students.

I learned from Samantha Brennan that the personal is fertile philosophical ground. Samantha teaches more than she knows. She is fond of exploring the practical implications of ethical theories, which inspired me to reflect on the considerations that affect the biggest decisions we typically make in a life. Jarrod and Eric were just starting school when she and I surveyed value theory, and I began thinking about how one might weigh the success of a life. Whether my journey through academia will contribute to their success only time will tell. When last I checked, one was skeptical of the existence of other minds, and the other thought that time travel was possible.

If not for Anthony Skelton's thoughtful analysis, the project would not have borne fruit. Several times, I walked into his office armed with the latest version of a chapter that seemed to be going nowhere, and left believing that my best ideas could stand up to scrutiny. Anthony asked the right questions, listened carefully, and introduced ideas only once he had a firm understanding of where I wanted to go, even when I did not. Whatever vagueness or ambiguity remains in my work are a product of my stubborn reluctance to yield to good sense.

For Natalie, who believed it was worth it.

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Executive Summary

The Standard View

Theories of well-being give an account of what it is for persons to fare well or to live prudentially valuable lives. I divide the theoretical landscape based on the position that theories accord to schedules of concerns. A schedule of concerns is the loose program that specifies the objects that engage the subject's active interest, attention, and care. Objective theories hold that the objects of one's concerns alone determine one's well-being. Subjective theories hold that one's concerns alone determine one's well-being. Several theories mean to tell us what it is for a person to fare well and we must decide which is best.

Analytic Criteria

The best theories of well-being should meet four tests. They should meet the criteria for descriptive adequacy; they should address the problem of authority; they should address the problem of worth; and they should escape the double bind problem.

Descriptive adequacy

In chapter one, I argue with Sumner that theories of well-being should be descriptively adequate. Descriptive adequacy can be understood in terms of four criteria: fidelity, generality, formality, and neutrality. I explain the four criteria and argue that we should temper our acceptance of them. The extent to which a

theory of well-being brings together disparate subjects and judgments typically counts toward its acceptance. However, placing too much emphasis on some of the criteria leaves us prone to three mistakes. First, it inclines us to ignore relevant differences amongst core welfare subjects; second, it conceals the role that communities play in their development and their welfare judgments; and, third, it rules out weakly partial but otherwise intuitive accounts of well-being. Sumner is not committed to these mistakes. Still, we can avoid this outcome by ensuring that the character, decisions, and behavior that theories of well-being describe are possible for the kind of welfare subject under consideration.

Authority and Worth

In chapter two, I argue that two theses about the structure of theories of well-being are particularly important: the *agent sovereignty* thesis and the *endorsement* thesis. The agent sovereignty thesis holds that one's schedule of concerns alone determines one's well-being. The endorsement thesis holds that the possession of some good contributes to one's well-being only if one endorses it under suitable conditions. What a theory entails about the truth of these two claims generates two problems: the problem of authority and the problem of worth.

In section 2.2, I argue that objective theories hold that the objects of one's concerns alone determine one's well-being. Objective theories reject both the agent sovereignty thesis and the endorsement thesis. On this view, endorsing the goods in one's life is at best an additional good alongside other goods. Such

theories confront the problem of authority. They imply that, provided the objects to which one relates are independently valuable, one can fare well despite the fact that one does not endorse the conditions of one's life. This alienates welfare subjects from their well-being.

In section 2.3, I argue that subjective theories hold that one's concerns alone determine one's well-being. Subjective theories accept both the agent sovereignty thesis and the endorsement thesis. Such theories confront the problem of worth. They imply that one can fare well despite the fact that the objects of one's concerns are not independently valuable. Critics object that the latter claim does not cohere well with some pre-analytic beliefs about well-being. Not all the objects in one's schedule of concerns are on equal axiological footing.

The Double Bind Problem

In sections 2.2 and 2.3, I argue that existing solutions to the problem of authority and the problem of worth each imply that a part of well-being does not contribute to well-being on its own, and that this inference is counter-intuitive. Call this the double bind problem. I appeal to two imaginary cases to illustrate the problem: John the grass counter, and Richard the artist. I argue that we should formulate an account of well-being that recognizes that each part of well-being on its own contributes to well-being at least to some extent.

An Alternate Account

In chapters three and four, I construct a hybrid account of well-being that meets the analytic criteria I outline in chapters one and two. We can address the problem of authority, the problem of worth, and the double bind problem by defending an accommodating view of well-being as endorsing worthy goods. The solution requires that we accept the endorsement thesis but reject the agent sovereignty thesis. This is a hybrid account of well-being that tries to take seriously the intuition that well-being has both a subjective and an objective part. The endorsement condition captures the subjective part of well-being; the worth condition captures the objective part of well-being. My considered view is that, in central cases, one fares well at a time when one endorses worthy goods.

Endorsement

In chapter three, I argue that addressing the problem of authority requires that we accept the endorsement thesis. In central cases, endorsement is necessary for well-being. This principle says that, in most cases, the possession of some good contributes to one's well-being only if one endorses it under suitable conditions. I then argue that we should reject the agent sovereignty thesis. One's schedule of concerns alone does not always determine one's well-being. The modal qualifier is necessary to escape the double bind problem. In some cases, endorsement alone contributes to one's welfare, though that contribution is small. Call the welfare contribution that endorsement makes in the absence of worthy goods "low fare." My considered view is that there are

discontinuities between low fare and the welfare contribution one gets from endorsing worthy goods. Call the latter “full fare.”

In section 3.2, I formulate a pluralistic model of endorsement that captures the diversity of subjective evaluative states that welfare subjects experience. Call this view *endorsement as favouring*. I argue that our practices surrounding endorsement and the negative implications of denying its importance lend credibility to the claim that endorsement matters to well-being, and that such endorsement meets an experience requirement for theories of well-being.

In section 3.3, I argue that subjective theories seem intuitive largely because of a more general agreement concerning the intrinsic importance of such endorsement. What best explains this agreement is that endorsement is constituted in part by a distinctive evaluative attitude that captures the intrinsic importance of endorsement experiences to one’s well-being. This is consistent with the agent-relativity of welfare claims.

In section 3.4, I then consider three objections to my view. The first two objections are related. First, one might object to making value conditional on endorsement. On this view, the value of a state of affairs does not depend on the subject’s endorsement. Second, one might object that subjects sometimes fail to endorse a state of affairs for superficial reasons. On this view, a state of affairs may be valuable even if the subject fails to endorse it. I argue that we can address either by restricting the scope of the endorsement thesis to welfare value, or by insisting that the endorsement in question occur under suitable conditions. The third objection targets the stipulation that endorsement is only

necessary for well-being in central cases. I argue that the qualification is necessary to escape the double bind problem, and that we can address this concern of subjectivists by recognizing a discontinuity in welfare value. A discontinuity in value is a sharp break between the welfare contributions of different kinds of welfare goods such that no amount of one good can ever be more valuable than some finite amount of another good. In the central case, faring well involves both endorsement and goods. Call the great contribution that endorsement and worth make together “full fare.” It is also true that endorsement on its own counts toward well-being, though it counts for less than the unity. Call the small contribution that endorsement makes on its own “low fare.” The discontinuity in welfare value between low fare and full fare is necessary to deal with the double bind problem without abandoning the endorsement thesis.

Worth

In chapter four, I argue that we can explain the sense in which objects are independently valuable without rejecting the endorsement thesis, but it requires that we abandon the agent sovereignty thesis. I then argue that this result is consistent with the previous chapter’s conclusions.

In section 4.2, I analyse the welfare judgments that we make from the first-person and the third-person standpoint. I argue that some welfare judgments presuppose that some objects are more worthy of concern than other objects, and that we have good reason to accept this characterisation of welfare judgments. Endorsement figures prominently in welfare judgments, but so do

questions concerning the worth of the objects one endorses. We should reject the agent sovereignty thesis.

In section 4.3, I argue that we can explain the sense in which certain objects are more worthy of concern than other objects without denying the endorsement thesis. The skillful pursuit of welfare is an expertise that one acquires and develops over time. The endorsements that subjects make under suitable conditions situate them as epistemic authorities in a community of knowers who share an interest in faring well. On this view, judgments of worth are intersubjective ideals that play a crucial role in developing expertise in the pursuit of welfare and enabling the practice of welfare value. Specifically, judgments of worth guide welfare subjects toward authentic standards of self-assessment and reliable sources of well-being. Faring well over time consists in endorsing objects worthy in this sense.

In section 4.4, I consider objections to this characterization of worth. First, I suggest that judgments of worth do not figure to the same extent in all welfare judgments. I then argue that judgments concerning the worth of an object are defeasible. I grant that the resulting account of worth is not the kind of independent value requirement that an objectivist about well-being would endorse. Worth remains tied to schedules of concerns in an intersubjective sense. However, I suggest that this feature is an asset rather than a liability.

Endorsing Worthy Goods

In chapter five, I survey three of the most important extant hybrid theories of well-being. I argue that these are important accounts in their own right, but that they do not meet the formality criterion and only weakly satisfy the generality criterion. I then summarize my own view and assess how well it meets the criteria for descriptive adequacy I describe in the first two chapters. *Well-being as endorsing worthy goods* is not a view of the highest well-being, or an account of what counts as a successful life. It is a hybrid account of what faring well-consists in at a time and over a period. On my view, one fares well at a time if one endorses worthy goods. I conclude by considering puzzles and problems that I leave unresolved.

Chapter 1: Well-Being and Descriptive Adequacy

1.1 Breaking Ground

Despite a surge of interdisciplinary research, there is a regrettable lack of consensus concerning what well-being consists in.[1] Theories of well-being give an account of what it is for persons to fare well or to live prudentially valuable lives. A prudentially valuable life is one that is good for the person who lives it. Theories of well-being serve three functions in practical reasoning: they are the foundation for rational decisions in which only the interests of the individual are concerned; they capture what we have reason to promote for others; and they are the basis for the consideration of a person's interests in moral argument.[2] A common view is that the first function has pride of place: well-being matters to benefactors and disputants because of its importance to welfare subjects.[3] A successful account of well-being does not necessarily add to the protean list of what human beings find prudentially valuable or worthwhile. Rather, it clarifies the intension of the concept, and grants a clearer basis for the measurement and interpersonal comparisons of well-being.

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[1] I use the terms "well-being," "welfare," and "prudential value" synonymously. Though some write as if "the good life" also denoted a life that is good for the person who lives that life, the phrase sometimes denotes a morally good life. To avoid ambiguity, I limit my usage to the first two terms.
[2] The term "person" denotes the welfare subject, but the set of persons in this context is not limited to humans or even to individuals. For instance, some accounts of well-being might entail that ecosystems are welfare subjects – that is, that some things are good and bad in themselves for ecosystems – but we need an additional premise to establish the moral standing of ecosystems.
[3] See Thomas Scanlon. "The Status of Well-Being." *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 1996: 93-143.

Several theories mean to tell us what it is for a person to fare well and we must decide which is best. We do not have an entirely free hand in choosing among alternative theories, however. In this chapter, I describe the broadly coherentist approach to normative questions that characterises the rest of the work. I then situate L.W. Sumner's test for descriptive adequacy for the selection of theories of well-being, and assess the criteria that compose it. I argue that we have reason to accept the fidelity criterion for descriptive adequacy, which ensures that theories of well-being cohere reasonably well with our beliefs of well-being. A well-defined test for descriptive adequacy acts as a kind of creative constraint on our deliberations. However, we should temper our acceptance of the other criteria. Placing too much emphasis on generality, formality, and neutrality leaves us prone to three mistakes. It inclines us to ignore relevant differences amongst core welfare subjects; it conceals the role that communities play in the development of welfare subjects and the practice of welfare judgments; and it rules out weakly partial but otherwise intuitive accounts of well-being. I propose revisions to the test for descriptive adequacy to avoid these mistakes.

1.2 Reflective Equilibrium

The broadly coherentist approach I propose to follow is consistent with the method of reflective equilibrium, a theory of justification first formulated by Nelson Goodman and given prominence in ethics by John Rawls.[4] According to this

[4] See Nelson Goodman. *Fact, Fiction and Forecast.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955; John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971. For a

account, a belief's justification cannot hinge on its relation to more foundational beliefs. Instead, a belief is justified if it coheres well with other considered judgments. As Rawls puts it, a belief is justified if it would survive a process that brought it into "reflective equilibrium" with all of one's normative and descriptive beliefs.[5] Bringing a belief into reflective equilibrium involves resolving conflicts between considered moral judgments and considered moral principles, though Rawls says little about how to resolve conflicts between them. A considered moral judgment is one made with confidence in light of the relevant non-moral facts, when one is calm and even-tempered, and when one does not stand to gain or lose based on the answer given. Thus, there is a sense in which considered moral judgments are self-evident. Although they remain open to revision, they are likely to be more stable over time than their less considered cousins.

The outcome of reflective equilibrium involves more than simple consistency. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls writes, "moral philosophy is Socratic: we may want to change our present considered judgments once their regulative principles are brought to light. And we may want to do this even though these principles are a perfect fit."[6] For instance, we might require that moral principles possess explanatory virtues that reach beyond their mere consistency with considered moral judgments, virtues such as simplicity or explanatory power.

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useful survey of reflective equilibrium in ethics, see Jeff McMahan, "Moral Intuition." *Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*. Edited by H. LaFollette. Oxford: Blackwell, 92-110.

[5] See John Rawls, "Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics," *Philosophical Review* 60 (1951), 177-97 and "The Independence of Moral Theory," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47 (1974-5): 5-22.

[6] Rawls (1971): 49.

Since Norman Daniels' accepted reformulation of reflective equilibrium, Rawls's model has evolved from a theory of justification to a full-blown method for conducting inquiries in normative ethics. On Daniels' view, the function of reflective equilibrium is to produce coherence in an ordered triple of a set of beliefs held by a particular person, namely, a set of considered moral judgments, a set of moral principles, and a set of relevant background theories.[7] As far as we focus on particular cases and the principles that relate to them, we are seeking only narrow reflective equilibrium. Conversely, wide reflective equilibrium tests our beliefs against developed moral and non-moral theories of various kinds, some of which contain moral beliefs of their own. These might include theories about the nature of persons, the interface between self-interest and morality, and the social function of morality.

The present investigation seeks to produce a narrow reflective equilibrium between a set of considered welfare judgments, and a set of relevant background theories about the nature of well-being. The equilibrium sought is narrow rather than wide because it does not consider how well the view coheres with various moral principles. It is typical for investigations into the nature of well-being to hold matters concerning the right in abeyance until matters concerning the good are nearly settled. In his seminal work on the nature of well-being, Sumner draws a helpful distinction between the normative and descriptive adequacy of a theory. A theory is normatively adequate if it plays its designated

[7] The exact scope of the relevant background theories is a matter of debate. See Norman Daniels. "Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics." *Journal of Philosophy* 76 (1979): 256–82; reprinted in Daniels, N., 1996, *Justice and Justification: Reflective Equilibrium in Theory and Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 21–46.

role within a given framework; it is descriptively adequate if it fits with our ordinary beliefs and judgments about well-being.[8] For Sumner, descriptive adequacy precedes normative adequacy. We cannot simply find an account that best serves our favorite theory of distributive justice, for instance, and assert that it best defines what well-being consists in. Our deliberations must first take into account our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being, and the coarse understanding of the concept and its cognates we presuppose in practical reasoning and common sense psychological explanations. We must then formulate a model that fits best with these convictions. Definitions of well-being that fail to prioritize descriptive adequacy risk failing as descriptions of what faring well consists in, however well they cohere with other theoretical commitments.

The idea, then, is to suspend judgment on the question of how well an account of well-being fits within a favoured normative framework until we get a sense of how well it coheres with our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being. There is no guarantee that we can assess theories for descriptive adequacy while holding open questions about their normative adequacy, but we cannot answer this question in advance of our inquiry. A well-defined test for the descriptive adequacy of a theory of well-being should act as a kind of creative constraint on our deliberations. It should help us recognize and ground relevant considerations without situating the analysis in favour of a given account. As we assess an account's degree of fit with our considered welfare judgments, the decision to

[8] Sumner (1996): 9.

favour one account of well-being over another should be the outcome of an impartial test.

A particular test for descriptive adequacy may prove too restrictive, however. If a test precludes relevant information, or if it excludes intuitive accounts of well-being from consideration, then we have good reason to revise it. In the next section, I argue that we have good reason to revise Sumner's test for descriptive adequacy. Specifically, we have reason to accept the fidelity criterion for descriptive adequacy, but we should temper our acceptance of its other criteria.

1.3 Descriptive Adequacy

Sumner parses descriptive adequacy in terms of fidelity, generality, formality, and neutrality.[9] *Fidelity* is perhaps the most important criterion. It requires that a theory of well-being cohere with our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being, and that it explain why beliefs are unreliable in cases in which it does not. The relevant beliefs consist in the intuitive assessments we make about our own well-being and the well-being of others in light of our pre-reflective beliefs about well-being. We make plain the data candidate theories must fit when we judge, for instance, that a life is going well or poorly, that someone has benefitted from good fortune, that a policy is in the best interest of a community, or that one group is enjoying a higher quality of life than another group. Fidelity needs only two assumptions. First, it assumes that there exists a network of pre-analytic concepts and welfare judgments stable enough to support a high degree of

[9] Sumner (1996): 8-10.

agreement concerning when an object is good for a person and when it is not. Sumner explains this assumption by analogy: just as answers to the question 'what is it for one event to cause another?' presuppose a shared network of causal concepts and judgments, so do answers to the question 'what is it to fare well?' Second, it assumes that we use the concept of well-being either implicitly or explicitly in common-sense psychological explanations, and in judgments concerning a person's well-being.[10] Importantly, claims concerning the fidelity of a given concept of well-being assume nothing about the moral implications of that concept. The notion of well-being may have moral implications, but well-being is not a moral notion.

Generality, the next criterion, has two parts. The first part requires that a theory of well-being capture the range of welfare judgments we make. For instance, it requires that a theory tell us what it is for a person to fare well or poorly at a time and over a period, and for a person to gain or lose well-being over time. The second part requires that a theory of well-being fit all core subjects of welfare assessments. This requirement is more challenging than it may seem at first glance, for the term "well-being" and its cognates apply to a wide-variety of subjects. We speak of the well-being of children and adults, plants and animals, communities and nations, and even species and ecosystems. A perfectly general theory of well-being will not only explain the various welfare judgments we make, but also capture what faring well consists in for the variety of subjects we deem capable of faring well.

[10] For a dissenting view, see Thomas Scanlon. "The Status of Well-Being." *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (1996): 93-143.

Next, *formality* requires that theories explain the nature of well-being rather than describe its typical sources. Specifically, theories should name the properties that make something good for a subject, that is, the features of a state of affairs that make an object good or bad for the entity it harms or benefits. Moreover, they should explain how these combine to inform judgments of how well a subject fares at a given moment and over time. Together, generality and formality require that an account of well-being explain at least two things. Where ***S*** is the welfare subject and ***x*** is the object affording the harm or benefit, an account of well-being ***W*** must explain the property that makes ***x*** good or bad for ***S*** at a time or interval ***t***, and how the particular contributions of a given object determines the overall level of well-being of ***S*** over time. Thus, a credible explanation of well-being should complete the formula "***x*** benefits ***S*** at ***t*** iff ***x*** stands in relation ***W*** to ***S*** at ***t***." The idea is that, while subjects may require satisfying vastly different conditions in order to fare well, a theory of well-being must abstract from the accidental features of subjects and their context to answer questions such as '*what is it for an entity to fare well?'* and *'what is for an object to benefit an entity?'* Unless we have reasons to believe otherwise, we should guide our inquiry with the assumption that the nature of well-being is separate from its sources.

Neutrality is the fourth and final criterion of descriptive adequacy. Sumner suggests that prior concerns for generality and formality should move us to accept the neutrality criterion, which calls for us to avoid bias toward a preferred

form of life.[11] If a theory is to apply to a wide range of cases involving creatures of diverse natures and tastes, if a theory is to consist of more than a list one's favorite sources of well-being, then it must not have built into it a bias toward concrete forms of life. Indeed, concerns over neutrality seem to arise naturally from previous commitments to generality and formality. We may deem that certain natures flourish better under some conditions than others, but as Sumner suggests, the judgment "must fall out as a confirming implication of a formally neutral theory."[12] Where fidelity ensures a given account of well-being coheres with our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being, generality, formality, and neutrality combine to exclude narrow, biased or otherwise confused accounts of well-being from consideration.

We have good reason to accept the fidelity criterion since it ensures that theories of well-being cohere reasonably well with our pre-reflective beliefs about well-being. Consider the two assumptions that underwrite it. Common welfare judgments evince our shared grasp of the concept of well-being, as well as the role these beliefs play in practical reasoning and in common sense psychological explanations. When we muse on the kind of life we want for ourselves and others, when we consider whether we would gain from taking up a project, when we reflect on whether a procedure is in the best interest of a patient, we reveal a rough grasp of what faring well consists in, how to measure it, and how to weigh the gain of one against the loss of another. Granted, the nature of well-being is contested, yet such disagreement is possible only in light of a broad, more basic

[11] Sumner (1996): 18.
[12] Ibid.

agreement about what counts as a sensible description of well-being and its cognate concepts. This basic agreement need not be deeply philosophical to be useful. For instance, discussions of well-being tend to converge on a plausible list of goods that contribute to well-being, though accounts of why these goods deserve to be on the list diverge widely.[13] Most would likely grant that wealth is merely a means to an end, that meaningful work and healthy relationships are important sources of well-being, and that poor physical and mental health tend to compromise one's well-being. These judgments about typical sources of well-being are much too coarse and provisional to constitute a suitable account of well-being on their own. However, they are typically stable and reliable enough to provide us with grist for the mill. We should be prepared to specify these judgments as we go, especially where they conflict with theoretical considerations that bear on their acceptance. Thus, the fidelity criterion fixes coherence as a creative constraint on our deliberations about well-being. We must choose among theories by seeing which one coheres better with our considered welfare judgments. If a theory has counterintuitive implications, then this evidence counts against it. In such cases, we must be willing to make a diagnosis and decide whether to reject our considered judgments or revise the theory of well-being under consideration.

Moreover, we have good reason to mind the aspects of the formality that prevent us from confusing the nature of well-being with an enumeration of

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[13] On convergence in theories of well-being, see Fred Feldman. *Pleasure and the Good Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 160.

common sources of well-being.[14] Most theorists concede that a wide variety of objects confer harms and benefits, and will index the list of welfare goods in some way to the welfare subject. On most accounts, the nature of well-being will not reduce to a list of welfare goods. The formality requirement ferrets out confusion by insisting that we separate the nature of well-being from the objects from which we derive welfare value. For instance, my son Jarrod might be tempted to define well-being as playing computer games on a cold autumn morning. However, the activity is a source of well-being rather than an account of its nature. Playing computer games on a cold autumn morning benefits Jarrod if and only if the activity figures in an account that captures what it is for Jarrod to fare well.

However, we should temper our acceptance of the generality, formality, and neutrality criteria for descriptive adequacy. Placing too great an emphasis on these three criteria leaves us prone to three mistakes. It inclines us to ignore relevant differences amongst core welfare subjects; it conceals the role that communities play in the development of welfare subjects and the practice of welfare judgments; and it rules out weakly partial but otherwise intuitive accounts of well-being.

Consider how insisting on generality inclines us to ignore relevant differences amongst core welfare subjects. Sensory hedonists offer perhaps the most general theory of well-being, suggesting that faring well consists in

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[14] Sumner warns against this confusion. See Sumner, "Two Conceptions of the Good." In *The Good Life and the Human Good.* Ellen Frankel Paul, et. al, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 1-15; Sumner (1996): 16-17.

experiencing surplus sensory pleasure.[15] Their account situates all the different welfare judgments we make along a single scale, and defines the set of core welfare subjects clearly as the set of entities capable of sensory pain and pleasure. Unfortunately, the claim that well-being consists only in experiencing surplus sensory pleasure is not faithful to our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being. The problem is that it seems incredible to suggest that faring well consists merely in securing surplus sensory pleasure. A life spent hooked up to an experience machine that ensures a surplus of sensory pleasure is not one in which welfare subjects fare well.[16] Where does the account go wrong?

One way to diagnose the mistake is to notice that sensory hedonists achieve generality at the cost of what we know empirically about human beings. They capture all core subjects of welfare assessments, from the fetus to the senior, only by prescribing a program that reduces the practice of welfare judgments to simple hedonistic terms. On this view, the only relevant features of welfare subjects are their capacity to feel sensory pleasure and to reason how to secure pleasure over time. The formality criterion does nothing to prevent the exclusion. The upshot is the imposition of an informational constraint on accounts of well-being, one that excludes much of what we know about the development and behavior of creatures like us, and precludes otherwise relevant information from consideration. Specifically, sensory hedonism focuses on the type of welfare judgments that are attainable in solitude, privileging first-person reports

[15] I complete a detailed survey of competing accounts of well-being in the next chapter.
[16] Robert Nozick. *State, Anarchy, and Utopia.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974, pp. 42-45.

of sensory pain and pleasure. On this view, what matters is determining the property that makes a state of affairs good for a subject, the conditions under which the subject correctly perceives those properties, and how best to relate to the property over time. No other feature of the welfare subject is directly relevant to the nature of well-being or the practice of welfare judgments. We might think that sensory hedonism errs in excluding too much information from its account of what faring well consists in, particularly in its account of the welfare subject.

We should inform our account of the welfare subject with the sum of what we know empirically about human psychology and the communities in which they grow and live. Conversely, we should reconsider or reject theories that clash with such knowledge. This suggests that theories of well-being should meet a minimal sort of psychological realism. When constructing a theory of well-being, we should ensure that the character, decisions, and behavior described are possible for the kind of welfare subject under consideration. The condition seems to be an implication of the fidelity criterion, an insistence that theories of well-being be faithful to our considered judgments of what we know about human beings and the communities in which they live.

We have good reason to accept this new constraint. First, placing too much emphasis on generality inclines us to ignore relevant differences amongst core welfare subjects. If we tailor the nature of well-being to the exercise of rational and perceptual capacities for the sake of generality, much will escape our notice. For instance, we will fail to notice that human faculties develop and deteriorate gradually through one's childhood, adulthood, and senescence, and

that reason and perception mature and decline at different rates. Next, it inclines us to construct welfare subjects in a way that conceals the role that communities play in their development and their practice of welfare judgments. Welfare subjects are not atomistic valuers who perceive, judge, and value in solitude. They are individuals who are born and grow in communities that influence and inform their considered judgments about what faring well consists in and which goods are worthy of pursuit. Consider children as welfare subjects. Unlike adults, children have few settled dispositions, and the choices of caregivers, whether implicit or explicit, have a large part to play in settling their future character. This process of education is necessary and appropriate, for the dispositions they would have in the absence of such influence would satisfy only the most basic theories of well-being. In fact, few theorists would take the dispositions human beings are born with as necessary and sufficient for well-being. Even sensory hedonists will want to shape the dispositions of the children in their care to impart them with the capacity to defer gratification, and desires theorists, the capacity to correct mistaken desires.

An account that modeled welfare subjects exclusively in terms of perceptual and rational capacities might downplay the role communities play in the development of those faculties, and describe the well-being of children entirely in terms of future goods. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for instance, Aristotle argues that human well-being consists in the exercise of one's rational faculties in accordance with excellence. Since they are unable to share in excellent activity owing to the immaturity of their rational faculties, Aristotle

estimates that children cannot fare well, and those "who are called happy are being congratulated by reason of the hopes we have for them."[17] Yet children are not merely virtuous-agents-in-waiting; they are welfare subjects in their own right, with the capacity to enjoy present as well as future goods. All things being equal, a child who is enjoying a day at the beach on warm summer day is faring well at a time, whatever future goods may be just over the horizon. Hence, a descriptively adequate account of well-being must construct subjects in terms that capture their growth from dependence to relative self-sufficiency without compromising the ability to assess their well-being at different stages of life. Imposing an informational constraint on welfare judgments for the sake of generality runs the risk of excluding contextually relevant features of states of affairs, including the role of communities in enabling and informing welfare judgments, and of barring legitimate welfare subjects from full consideration. We should insist, then, that adequate theories of well-being commit to a minimal sort of psychological realism, which includes what we know about the social setting of welfare subjects. In effect, we might insist that fidelity take precedence not only in the construction of theories of well-being but also in the construction of welfare subjects.

It is important to note that contemporary accounts of well-being need not commit to an atomistic construction of the welfare subject or the exclusion of communal influences on moral development. Sumner's criteria for descriptive

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[17] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* (1098a10-15; 1100a1-5). To be fair, Aristotle does recognize the important contribution of political communities to moral education. See *Politics* (1252a-1253b).

adequacy are not wedded to either of these assumptions. For instance, he recommends that a reasonably general theory of well-being can be attentive to the variety of subjects for whom we make welfare judgments, though our account is bound to exclude some things from the set of welfare subjects. “A theory of well-being would clearly be incomplete were it to exclude children or cats,” he writes, “but it would not clearly be incomplete were it to exclude paramecia or plants.”[18] This complicates the task of finding a general account of well-being. One challenge is that different welfare subjects have very different capacities and characteristics: some manifest a form of mental life, others are insensate; some are individuals, still others, collectivities. Sumner proposes that we distinguish between our core beliefs about well-being, those we hold with the highest degree of confidence, and peripheral beliefs less likely to survive critical reflection. “Whereas a theory must fit the core of our concept, it cannot avoid some degree of stipulation in its periphery,” he writes, “yielding determinate results where the application of that concept is vague and taking sides where it is in dispute.”[19] We may legitimately strive to preserve the considered intuitions, beliefs, and practices surrounding our concept of well-being, even if we do so at the expense of a more general account. Hence, there is no reason to believe that Sumner is committed to either rigid atomism or individualism. In this sense, the discussion highlights elements of descriptive adequacy that bear consideration rather than a censure of Sumner’s position.

[18] Sumner (1996):15.
[19] Ibid.

We should be attentive to the possibility of extending the core-periphery distinction to beliefs about the welfare subject. Just as we can distinguish between core and peripheral beliefs about well-being, so too can we distinguish between core and peripheral beliefs about the welfare subject. Applying Sumner's distinction in this direction creates a logical space for a more subtle construction that recognizes relational aspects of the subject that might otherwise escape our notice. To borrow Sumner's turn of phrase, our account of the welfare subjects would be incomplete if it excluded the relevant characteristics of welfare subjects at different stages of life, or the role that communities play in developing the capacities of welfare subjects, a claim I defend in the fourth chapter. However, our account would not be clearly incomplete were it to exclude more idiosyncratic characteristics, such as height, weight or eye color.

This suggests a refinement to an earlier claim concerning the generality of accounts of well-being: we should expect accounts of well-being not only to exhibit a degree of unity, but also to accommodate relevant distinctions between welfare subjects. While generalisations in our construction of the welfare subject are inevitable, we should be prepared to justify the theoretical choices we make, appreciate the distortions they impose on accounts of well-being, and realize when generality comes at too great a cost. It is possible that conflicts between generality and fidelity are irrevocable, in which case we might abandon attempts to produce a unified theory of well-being, and accept that a theory may be narrow

but true for the beings to which it applies.[20] As always, the burden of proof rests with those who would advance a more complex account of well-being.

Julia Annas constructs an account of well-being that exhibits this kind of refinement. Annas suggests that questions about the quality of life should be attentive to the complication that individuals come already grouped in families and communities, and that gender influences the details of one's life at least to some extent. In most societies, the fact of being a man or a woman determines both one's life choices and how one perceives them. She suggests that societal norms governing the gendered division of labor are bad for women, and she wonders whether we can best explain the injustice through an appeal to human nature. "There are everywhere *two actual norms* for human life," she writes, "in no society is it indifferent to the shape of your life and what you can make of it, whether you are a man or a woman."[21] However, she is unsure whether the two norms are parts of a single account of human florishing, or whether each belongs to a distinct account. Her point seems to be that there might be two different accounts of flourishing, one for women and one for men, based on the assumption that men and women have distinct natures. She contents herself with pointing out the harms that gender and social location can impose on welfare subjects. For instance, women who live in traditional societies in which gender strongly determines suitable ways of life will have difficulty conceiving of

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[20] Anthony Skelton explores this possibility in his own work on well-being. See "Utilitarianism, Welfare, Children," in Alexander Bagattini and Colin Macleod (eds.) *The Well-Being of Children in Theory and Practice* (Springer, forthcoming) and "What Makes a Child's Life Go Well?" (unpublished).

[21] Annas "Women and the Quality of Life: Two Norms or One." In *The Quality of Life*, edited by Amartya Sen and Matha Nussbaum. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 279.

alternatives that violate these conservative social norms. As a result, they may adjust their desires to their circumstances as an adaptive strategy to achieve a measure of contentment.[22]

Just as we should temper our acceptance of the generality and formality criteria for descriptive adequacy, so too should we temper our acceptance of neutrality. Neutrality requires that our theories of well-being be impartial toward rival forms of life. The claim is open to interpretation, however, and some readings rule out weakly partial but otherwise intuitive accounts of well-being that deserve consideration.

Strong neutrality disqualifies accounts of well-being that violate the welfare subject's evaluative perspective. On this view, descriptively adequate theories of well-being should be indifferent to the choices of welfare subjects, since the evaluation of welfare goods squarely rests on a welfare subject's concerns. For better or worse, well-being is a function of choice. Conversely, *weak neutrality* disqualifies accounts of well-being that advance unfounded substantive critiques of a welfare subject's concerns. On this view, accounts that advance more than a procedural critique require justification, though we need not disqualify them on principle. Well-being is still a function of choice, but not every choice counts toward one's well-being.

Some theories of well-being satisfy strong neutrality. Unrestricted desire theories satisfy strong neutrality since they identify faring well with the satisfaction of the welfare subject's actual desires. The evaluation of a good rests

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[22] On adaptive preferences, see J. Elster, "Sour Grapes," in A. Sen and B. Williams (eds.), *Utilitarianism and Beyond.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 219-238.

squarely with the welfare subject’s concerns. It is worth noting that abbreviating the set of desires to those formed under suitable conditions, as informed desire theories do, need not violate strong neutrality. The recommendations of informed desire theories do conflict, at times, with the agent’s present concerns. However, informed desire theories accept the subject’s concerns as normative for their well-being, and only impose procedural conditions to deal with problems with its implementation. Like simpler unrestricted account, informed desire theories rest the evaluation of a good squarely on the welfare subject’s concerns, though they insist that the set manifest a rational structure. Therefore, both unrestricted and informed desire accounts satisfy the strong neutrality criterion for descriptive adequacy. Likewise, hedonistic theories satisfy strong neutrality, but only if psychological hedonism is true. The latter is the view that welfare subjects in fact desire only pleasure.[23] If psychological hedonism were true, the recommendations of hedonistic theories would always align with one’s concerns, since experiencing pleasure would be one’s only concern. Psychological hedonism is false however: most welfare subjects desire things other than pleasure. Thus, the recommendations of hedonistic theories do at times conflict with the concerns of welfare subjects. For the hedonist, faring well consists in experiencing surplus pleasure *whatever the subject’s concerns*. As such, hedonists run afoul the strong neutrality criterion for descriptive adequacy.

Nonetheless, strong neutrality is an overly demanding criterion for descriptive adequacy. An account satisfies strong neutrality only if the evaluative

[23] On psychological hedonism, R.B. Brandt, “Happiness,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Paul Edwards. New York: Macmillan, 1967.

perspective of the welfare subject alone determines the nature of well-being. This condition limits the set of plausible accounts of well-being to only a few theories. Suppose a theory of well-being defines faring well in terms of a list of independently valuable goods whose status as welfare goods does not depend on the concerns of welfare subjects. The best such a theory can do to account for one's concerns is to allow one to decide the manner and the extent to which one instantiates specific goods in one's life. Since the evaluative perspective of welfare subjects does not determine which goods deserve the status of welfare goods, these theories run afoul strong neutrality. Surely, this condition is too strong. The Euthyphro dilemma is compelling because each of its horns makes sense of different welfare judgments.[24] Some welfare judgments seem consistent with the claim that the nature of well-being is not entirely up to the welfare subject; others, with the claim that the evaluative perspective of welfare subjects determines the nature of well-being.[25] We cannot rule against accounts of well-being that make a place for independently valuable goods before we set out on our inquiry, especially since we do not yet have reason to believe that the concerns of welfare subjects alone determine the nature of well-being. We should reject strong neutrality as a criterion for descriptive adequacy.

Still, it is worth noticing that both horns of the Euthyphro dilemma are consistent with the claim that one can be mistaken about what well-being

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[24] "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?" Plato. *Euthyphro.* In *Complete Works*. Hackett Publishing Company: Cambridge, 1997, (10a).

[25] For a relevant discussion, see Richard Kraut, "Two Conceptions of Happiness," *The Philosophical Review,* vol. 88 (1979).

consists in. On both accounts, we believe that some states of affairs have welfare value, and we disagree about the nature of well-being. We seek evidence for our opinions and act as if there is something to discover. We act as if there is a fact of the matter, and talk about welfare value claims as being true or false, and of people knowing the better even while doing the worse. What is at stake in this debate is not the realism of welfare value but the nature of well-being itself.

Weak neutrality is a more promising criterion for descriptive adequacy. It holds that accounts of well-being advancing substantive critiques of schedules of concerns should justify their violation of the evaluative perspective of the welfare subject. The intent of weak neutrality is to avoid partial, idiosyncratic accounts of well-being that reveal more about the biases of welfare theorists than the nature of well-being itself. Concerns over neutrality about the good arise most often in political philosophy, where anxieties over the unjustified encroachment of the state on individual conceptions of the good loom large. For instance, Rawls suggests that his conception of justice does not "try to evaluate the relative merits of different conceptions of the good." Rather, it assures the individual access to primary goods, those necessary for any rational plan of life, and guarantees "an equal liberty to pursue whatever plan of life [one] pleases as long as it does not violate what justice demands."[26] We may have practical reasons to endorse neutrality in the design of our institutions. Perhaps principles of justice that do not themselves presuppose a particular conception of the good do a better job of governing social and political institutions in pluralistic societies.

[26] Rawls (1971): 91.

Perhaps we have reason to believe that individuals know best which states of affairs are the most promising sources of well-being, or that individuals derive greater welfare value from states of affairs if they choose freely among a variety of forms of life, so that interfering with their evaluative perspective is self-defeating.[27]

These concerns justify following a policy of respect for the evaluative perspective of welfare subjects; however, they imply very little about the nature of well-being itself, or the underlying agreement concerning what counts as a sensible description of well-being. Its role in political philosophy notwithstanding, weak neutrality might seem out of place in discussions concerning the nature of well-being. What reason do we have to believe that the most descriptively adequate concept of well-being is one that satisfies the weak neutrality criterion for descriptive adequacy?

Neutralism arises from a healthy skepticism concerning substantive accounts of well-being. Note that such doubt cannot extend to all welfare claims. Radical skepticism would undermine both objective and subjective accounts of well-being. It would undermine not only the substantive claim that some ends have greater intrinsic welfare value than others; it would also undermine the formal claim that the normative evaluation of choices rest on the subject's concerns. Few theorists, regardless of creed, can afford to endorse such radical doubt. However, selective skepticism about our ability to know the good seems to

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[27] See J.S. Mill. *On Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2008 [1859]), especially chapter 4. For a contemporary defense of this view, see R. Goodin. "Liberalism and the Best-Judge Principle," *Political Studies* 38: 181-5.

motivate at least some claims surrounding weak neutrality. For instance, an important proponent of liberal neutrality, D.A. Lloyd-Thomas grants that while "some of our beliefs about what is of intrinsic value are very probably true… it is not the case that we already know (everything) that is of intrinsic value" or that we are certain beyond reasonable doubt which things have intrinsic value.[28] Similar doubts underscore Sumner's own concern for neutrality. "A [substantive] value requirement… presupposes that there is an evaluative analogue to empirical truth or reality: a right answer to every question about value."[29] Whether substantive accounts of well-being must demonstrate such completeness is an open question. The point here is only that the claim that substantive accounts can propose even a modest analogue to the evaluative standpoint from which welfare subjects are to make welfare judgments is open to reasonable doubt. If proponents of substantive accounts are unable to allay these concerns, then we have good reason to reject their account.

Typically, this selective skepticism targets claims about a value requirement beyond the responses of the subject. In fairness, accounts that respect the evaluative standpoint of the welfare subject seem less susceptible to the skeptic's complaint. Such accounts rely on the presumption of truth we grant to a person's self-reports for their appeal. Since Descartes, most philosophers have thought either that self-knowledge is epistemically distinctive or that pronouncements about one's mental states bear a special presumption of truth.[30]

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[28] D.A. Lloyd-Thomas, *In Defence of Liberalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 120.
[29] Sumner (1996): 164.
[30] See Anthony Hatzimoysis. *Self-Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

When I report on my propositional attitudes, I am not *tracking* the facts at issue so much as I am *establishing* them, and others tend to construe the report as authoritative unless they have good reason to be skeptical about it. Hence, the conclusion that well-being must depend on the evaluative perspective of the welfare subject. If welfare judgments are reports of inner perceptual states, then I am the final authority on whether my life is going well *for me*. The initial plausibility of such subjective accounts does not imply that we should equate welfare value with all but the most direct description of a welfare subject's concerns. Most accounts of well-being do not. Instead, such subjective accounts strive to reveal procedural flaws that undercut the rationality of welfare subjects, or that point to social and cultural factors that constrain their autonomy.

Whether theories of well-being provide a procedural or a substantive critique of a subject's concerns, it is fair to insist that theories that stray from a straightforward ratification of subjectivity provide an account of exactly how far they stray from the subjective measure and why. Unlike strong neutrality, however, weak neutrality does not dismiss substantive theories without due consideration, but only insists that they justify critiques of the welfare subject's evaluative perspective.

1.4 Conclusion

Several theories mean to tell us what it is for a person to fare well and we must decide which is best. I argued that the best theories of well-being should pass a test for descriptive adequacy. Sumner parses his own test in terms of

fidelity, generality, formality, and neutrality. On his view, the best theories of well-being should be faithful to our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being, and their use in practical reasoning and common-sense psychological explanations. Next, they should capture the range of welfare judgements we make, and apply to all core subjects to whom these judgements apply. Finally, they should explain the nature of well-being rather than list common sources of well-being, and they should strive to remain neutral between different concrete forms of life. I argued that we should accept the fidelity criterion for descriptive adequacy.

However, we should temper our acceptance of the other criteria. The extent to which a theory of well-being brings together disparate subjects and judgments typically counts toward its acceptance. Yet, placing too much emphasis on generality, formality, and neutrality leaves us prone to three mistakes. First, it inclines us to ignore relevant differences amongst core welfare subjects; second, it conceals the role that communities play in their development and their welfare judgments; and, third, it rules out weakly partial but otherwise intuitive accounts of well-being. We can avoid this outcome by ensuring that the character, decisions, and behavior that theories of well-being describe are possible for the kind of welfare subject under consideration. In effect, the principle reminds us that the fidelity criterion applies to both well-being and the welfare subject. Both should be faithful to our considered judgments of what we know about well-being, welfare subjects, and the communities in which they live.

Over the course of the next four chapters, I argue that rival accounts of well-being confront problems that should encourage us to investigate

alternatives, namely, the problem of *authority*, the problem of *worth*, and the double bind problem. In the second chapter, I situate the problems in the context of the story of well-being, and I investigate strategies to address them in the third and fourth chapters. In the fifth chapter, I bring together the lessons of my investigation into my considered view. I argue that we can address the problems of authority and the problem of worth by defending an accommodating view of well-being according to which one fares well at a time when one endorses goods worthy of concern. This is a hybrid account of well-being that tries to take seriously the intuition that well-being has both a subjective and an objective component.

Chapter 2: Authority, Worth, and the Double Bind

2.1 The Story of Well-Being

The story of well-being groups theories of well-being into three sets. Hedonistic theories claim that well-being consists in experiencing surplus pleasure. Desire theories claim that well-being consists in getting a subset of what one wants, or in having more of one's (ideal) desires satisfied than frustrated. Finally, objective list theories claim that well-being consists in the possession of a greater number of independently valuable objects than worthless ones.

We can divide the theoretical landscape into subjective and objective accounts of well-being. It is worth borrowing from L.W. Sumner's seminal work on the subjectivity of well-being to get the conflict between subjective and objective accounts right. "The defining feature of all subjective theories," he writes, "is that they make your well-being depend on your own concerns," whereas objective theories "exclude all reference to attitudes or concerns."[31] Given their exclusion of subjectivity, objective accounts must find another approach to capture the intuition that a person's life is prudentially valuable only if it is going well *for them*. Hence, the key difference between subjective and objective accounts is the necessity of the reference to one's schedule of concerns, the loose program that specifies the objects that engage one's active interest, attention, and care. Such a program need not be particularly organized

[31] L.W. Sumner. *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996: 43.

or forward-looking to constitute a schedule of concerns, though some programs certainly can be.

In this chapter, I examine the structure of different theories of well-being. Specifically, I examine the place of the concerns of welfare subjects in this structure and the value of the objects of their concerns. I argue that two theses about the structure of theories of well-being are particularly important: the agent sovereignty thesis and the endorsement thesis. The agent sovereignty thesis holds that one's schedule of concerns alone determines one’s well-being. The endorsement thesis holds that the possession of some good contributes to one’s well-being only if one endorses it under suitable conditions. What a theory entails about the truth of these two claims generates two problems.

First, objective theories hold that the objects of one’s concerns alone determine one’s well-being. Objective theories reject both the agent sovereignty thesis and the endorsement thesis. Such theories confront the problem of *authority*. They imply that, provided the objects to which one relates are independently valuable, one can fare well despite the fact that one does not endorse the conditions of one’s life. This alienates welfare subjects from their well-being. Second, subjective theories hold that one’s concerns alone determine one’s well-being. Subjective theories accept both the agent sovereignty thesis and the endorsement thesis. Such theories confront the problem of *worth.* They imply that one can fare well despite the fact that the objects of one’s concerns do not have independent value. Critics object that this claim does not cohere well with some pre-analytic beliefs about well-being. Not all the objects in one’s

schedule of concerns are on equal axiological footing. The longevity of the Euthyphro dilemma and the ease with which each side constructs a general case against the other speaks to the salience of the subjective-objective distinction in value theory.

2.2 Authority

Not long ago, subjectivists could omit objective theories from their discussions of well-being. In arguing for a happiness theory of well-being, for example, R.B. Brandt dismisses objective theories as obsolescent and proposes to ignore them.[32] Even so, objective theories have undergone a revival in recent decades, and they provide a legitimate counterpoint to subjective theories.

Generally, objectivists believe that faring well consists in suitably relating to independently valuable objects. Characteristically, they strive to provide a complete list of the goods that constitute a life that is good for the person who lives it. In most cases, the list includes more than experiencing surplus pleasure or getting what one wants. The items on the list are intrinsically good rather than good as a means to some further end, and what is good for a person is to relate suitably to the items on a correct and complete list of goods. Accordingly, the properties that make a given object intrinsically good for a person at a time are *having independent value*. Likewise, the properties that make a given object intrinsically bad for a person at a time are *lacking independent value*. How one relates to independently valuable objects also has an impact on one's well-being.

[32] Richard Brandt. *A Theory of the Good and the Right.* Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1979, 246.

For instance, insofar as knowledge has independent value, one benefits at a time not only when one instantiates it in one's life, but also when one pursues it in a suitable way and directs it toward suitable objects.[33] Conversely, one suffers at a time not only when one remains ignorant, but also when one pursues knowledge in an unsuitable way, pursues knowledge of unsuitable objects, or applies knowledge to unsuitable ends.

Beyond this rudimentary description, objective theories are structurally complex. Some proposals specify one list for all welfare subjects, or a distinct list for relevant subsets of subjects. For instance, the proposal to index the nature of well-being to gender is consistent with an approach that sports two distinct lists of objective goods.[34] Other proposals specify that some objects produce a greater amount of well-being than other objects. One might hold, for instance, that pleasure contributes to one's well-being but that goods that engage one's rational faculties make greater contributions to one's well-being. Others specify that the welfare contributions of some objects plateaus or even decreases after they reach a certain magnitude.[35] For instance, it is commonplace that successive episodes of pleasure provide a diminishing marginal return such that contributions become negligible beyond a given magnitude. Still others stipulate that some goods are necessary to a person's well-being while others merely

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[33] For a proponent of this view, see John Finnis. *Natural Law and Natural Rights.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980: 72.

[34] See section 1.3. Annas is agnostic about whether there truly are two accounts of well-being at work, or whether the gendered norms represent different facets of a single account. See "Women and the Quality of Life: Two Norms or One." In *The Quality of Life*, edited by Amartya Sen and Matha Nussbaum. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

[35] For instance, see Kagan, "Well-Being as Enjoying the Good," *Philosophical Perspectives* (2009): 253-272. Kagan is defending a hybrid view of well-being.

enhance it, or that some goods are such that welfare subjects must appreciate the properties that make them good in order to benefit from them.

Despite this diversity, all objective theories are committed to renouncing the agent sovereignty thesis. The *agent sovereignty thesis* holds that one's schedule of concerns alone determines one's well-being. Subjectivity is both necessary and sufficient for well-being. Since objectivists believe the axiological status of the objects of one's concerns does not depend on their inclusion in one's schedule of concerns, they must reject the claim that one's schedule of concerns alone determines one's well-being. Subjectivity is not sufficient for well-being: an object can have welfare value even if it does not figure on one's schedule of concerns. As Finnis puts it, "a [person] who is well-informed…simply is better off…than a [person] who is…ignorant, that the state of the one is better than the state of the other, not just in this particular case or that, but in all cases, as such, universally, and whether I like it or not."[36]

Objectivists may accept that one's schedule of concerns is an important source of objective goods. This is consistent with the *additive thesis*, the claim that the pursuit of the loose program that specifies the objects that engage one's active interest, attention, and care contributes to one's well-being along with other welfare goods. However, the axiological status of the objective goods in one's life does not depend on whether they figure on one's schedules of

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[36] John Finnis. *Natural Law and Natural Rights.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980: 72. Objectivists can combine this account of faring well at a time with any view of aggregation they like, which will produce an account of faring well over time. Importantly, objectivists need not be totalists, however; they can select lives instead of moments as an evaluative focal point and appeal to organic unities in assessing well-being.

concerns. In section 1.3, we saw how to construe hedonism as an objective theory of well-being that lists only a single welfare good. If psychological hedonism were true, the recommendations of hedonistic theories would always align with the welfare subject's concerns, but psychological hedonism is false. Therefore, the recommendations of hedonistic theories do at times conflict with the concerns of welfare subjects. Experiencing surplus pleasure contributes to one's well-being *whatever one's concerns*. Such a view implies that pleasure by itself is good for the welfare subject, but it conflicts with the strong neutrality criterion for descriptive adequacy. Pleasure and pain affect one's well-being whatever one's schedule of concerns.

Griffin's ideal desire account of well-being strives to strike a similar balance between subjectivity and objectivity. On his view, ideal desires include desires for objects that tend to figure on schedules of concerns. For instance, one might claim that enjoyment and suffering are objects that one would desire if one appreciated their nature. Suppose that, fully informed and thinking clearly, all welfare subjects would desire both enjoyment and autonomy. It follows that all welfare subjects would benefit from instantiating these two goods in their life. However, it is possible that, in some cases, autonomous pursuits would produce such anxieties for a particular welfare subject that instantiating it would not to be worth the trouble.[37] "That is not to deny autonomy its objectivity," writes Griffin, "[or] that it is a universal value. It still allows that autonomy would, other things being equal, make his life better."[38] The enjoyment and suffering of this particular

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[37] James Griffin. *Well-Being.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 32-33.
[38] Griffin (1986): 54.

welfare subject do not change the welfare value of autonomy itself, but they figure with it on a list of objective goods. We must consider them along with the others. Provided they allow for such cases, objectivists can construct accounts of well-being that incorporate objects normally found on schedules of concerns as a reliable source of well-being without compromising the objectivity of well-being itself.

One might doubt whether objectivists provide a legitimate alternative to subjective theories of well-being. In constructing their accounts, objectivists cannot avoid making normative judgments about what is valuable, suitable, or appropriate because formal, descriptive claims about the concerns of welfare subjects do not settle matters. As such, their prescriptions run the risk of conflicting with the neutrality criterion for descriptive adequacy. The conflict will be a matter of degree. We need not dismiss as hopelessly biased accounts of well-being that are only weakly partial to a given form of life, but considerations of neutrality will disqualify more obviously biased accounts of well-being from consideration. Moreover, objectivists seem prone to confusing the nature of well-being with its typical sources, which violates the formality criterion for descriptive adequacy. Providing a list of objective goods is not yet to provide an account of the nature of well-being. These worries are premature, however. If objectivists can justify the limited place they accord to schedules of concerns, and if they can provide an account of what unifies the objects on their list, then we may yet have good reason to give them serious consideration.

Accounts born from a re-examination of the natural law tradition strive to do just that. Over the course of several works, Grisez, Boyle, and Finnis develop a teleological account of well-being according to which faring well consists in relating suitably to basic human goods.[39] The concept of a basic good is broadly consistent with the concept of intrinsic value, according to which an object has value "as such," "in itself," or "for its own sake." Like intrinsic goods, the basic goods we pursue for their own sake differ from instrumental goods, which we pursue for the sake of something else. One or more of these basic goods underlie any purpose for acting, at least when our goals are "specifically human."[40] On this view, a person fares well if they instantiate basic goods in their lives, though the particular goods instantiated will depend on the particular life. The most direct way to uncover basic goods is by reflecting on the purpose of a given action until one reaches reasons for acting which need no further reason, objects one pursues for their own sake. Grisez et al provide different lists of basic goods in various works, but settle as a rule on life, health, safety, knowledge and aesthetic experience, excellence in work and play, as well as personal and communal harmony.[41]

This reconsideration of the natural law tradition rejects agent sovereignty. The welfare value of the basic goods that characterise distinctively human lives is a function of object-given properties. For Grisez et al, a distinctly human life is a

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[39] For recent work in the tradition, see John Finnis. *Natural Law and Natural Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980; T.D.J. Chappell. *Understanding Human Goods*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995; David Oderberg and Timothy Chappell. *Human Values: New Essays on Ethics and Natural Law.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

[40] Grisez, et al. "Practical Principles, Moral Truth and Ultimate Ends." *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987): 103.

[41] Idem, 99-152.

rational life, and a life is rational only when intentionally grounded in a set of basic goods that humans discover through observation and reflection. While schedules of concerns alone do not determine one's well-being, they still figure prominently in the account.

Schedules of concerns play an important part in the discovery of welfare value but not in its justification. The welfare value of basic goods is self-evident; we know the propositions stating their contributions to a distinctly human life just by grasping the meaning of their terms. Our knowledge of welfare value is not intuitive but direct and empirical, at least when we are fully informed and thinking clearly. We can deepen our insight into their welfare contributions by studying the natural inclinations of human beings and noticing that humans tend to recognize certain objects as basic reasons for action in distinctively human lives. Grisez et al are eager to address concerns that their view conflicts with the naturalistic fallacy. Crucially, they insist, we do not infer the value of these objects from the observation that we tend to pursue them. Instead, we weigh our tendency to pursue a given object as evidence for the claim that it is in fact good as such, an insight we then deepen through study, reflection, and further observation. For instance, we notice our own tendency to question, analyze, classify; we see curiosity bloom in others; we consider Aristotle's claim that "all men by nature desire to know"; finally, we appreciate the basic value of knowledge.[42] This process of intuitive induction implies that the basic goods tend to figure among the objects that engage one's active interest, attention, and care.

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[42] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (980a25).

In passing, it is noteworthy that the view is consistent with the additive thesis, though Finnis et al. do not defend the latter view. The additive thesis captures the welfare contributions of suitable concerns by counting them along with other objective goods. The pursuit of the loose program that specifies the objects that engage our active interest, attention, and care contributes to our well-being, at least when those objects are suitable for creatures like us.

The features of this reconsideration of the natural law tradition provide an initial response to worries concerning the formality and neutrality of the account. The judgment that certain objects are more suitable than others does not rest on mere bias. Nor does it confuse common sources of well-being with the nature of well-being. Rather, it rests on a robust, teleological conception of human beings as subjects whose fulfillment hinges on the exercise of their rational faculties. "Any creature which acts is one whose reality is not fully given at the outset," they write. "It has possibilities which can be realized only through its acting."[43] Human beings fulfill their nature when basic goods motivate their actions. Such goods are not merely a source of well-being but "aspects of the fulfillment of persons" and parts of well-being itself.[44] Of course, we may fail to act in accordance with basic goods. Perhaps we fail to reflect sufficiently on our choices, so that we do not yet see how to instantiate basic goods in our lives. Perhaps we see how to instantiate basic goods, but we fail to follow through or succeed only in acting against our better judgment. In such cases, our lives will suffer from a dearth of goods. When we choose rationally, our actions instantiate basic goods, we fulfill

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[43] Grisez, et al (1987): 114.
[44] Ibid.

our nature, and we benefit. When we choose irrationally, we fail to instantiate basic goods, we fall short of the ideal, and we suffer harm. The resulting account is weakly partial to the rational life, perhaps, but its justification rests on a metaphysically complex account of human nature rather than on mere bias.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the most pointed objections to the natural law account target this metaphysical apparatus. Even if we grant natural law theorists the explanation of how we come to know basic goods, the claim that some goods correlate with a normative account of human nature that uniquely determines what is good for a person is difficult to accept. Grisez et al postulate that the capacity to act in accordance with reason is what makes human lives distinctly human, a time-honoured view rooted in the Aristotelian corpus.[45] Still, it is unclear why we should accept the claim that humans have a single function, or that the exercise of reason is more distinctly human than, say, the qualified pursuit of pleasure or desire satisfaction. Crucially, the authors explicitly discount pleasure as an *intelligible* good, one that we can think of as providing a reason for acting, because its pursuit does not lead to the fulfillment of the person as a whole.[46] However, this consideration is unlikely to sway a committed subjectivist since the notion of fulfillment at play presupposes an answer to the very question at issue, namely, whether it is best to conceive of well-being independently of schedules of concerns. It is not clear why it would be illegitimate for skeptics to weigh the human tendency to pursue pleasure or satisfy desires as evidence for

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[45] See, for instance, Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* (1098a5-10): "…the human function is the soul's activity that expresses reason [as itself having reason] or requires reason [as obeying reason]".
[46] Grisez et al (1987): 105.

the claim that well-being consists in subjective rather than objective considerations. Without a further argument to privilege one form of life over the other as distinctly human, the natural law account runs the risk of begging the question against others who would instead ground well-being directly in schedules of concerns. Moreover, without the account's rational constraint on human nature, it is not clear that simply choosing the objects we tend to pursue by nature contributes to our well-being.

Doubts concerning the metaphysical apparatus of the natural law account make it vulnerable to objections from formality and neutrality. Although there is some evidence for the claim that human beings tend to pursue certain goods, the lacuna opens the account to charges that it is confusing the sources of well-being with its nature, and flirting with elitism and paternalism. For their part, subjectivists can grant that the goods that Grisez et al identify as independently valuable are reliable sources of well-being. As a rule, for instance, human beings desire to know and enjoy satisfying their curiosity. Where the natural law account falters, however, subjectivists can give an account of the properties that make knowledge valuable in terms of well-being – namely, its presence on the schedule of concerns of most welfare subjects.

A second, related objection is that the natural law account seems too narrow. The importance the account accords to the intentional willing of a coherent program of action weakens its generality, that is, its capacity to unify the different welfare judgments we make and the welfare subjects about whom we make them. Surely, some goods contribute to one's well-being despite the fact

that they do not figure on a detailed program of action. This objection holds even if we limit, unrealistically, the set of welfare subjects to human beings. As it stands, the account that Grisez et al construct seems most relevant to welfare assessments involving complete human lives or the lives of human adults at the height of their faculties. This is consistent with their Aristotelian inclinations. Famously, Aristotle ties well-being to the exercise of one's rational capacities, and suggests that well-being assessments are most reliable when considering complete lives. "For one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one day," he writes, "nor, similarly, does one day or a short time make us blessed and happy."[47]

However, not all welfare subjects who lack this kind of rationality and coherence are obviously faring poorly, nor is it realistic to insist that we restrict well-being judgments to complete lives.[48] It is revealing that Aristotle denies that children can fare well at all. Since they cannot share in rational activity, "boys who are called happy are being congratulated by reason of the hopes we have for them."[49] Surely, we sometimes want to claim that healthy toddlers with a sunny disposition are faring well at a time. This is true despite their inability to plan and pursue a complex axiological program, and our ignorance of the future goods fate has in store for them. Likewise, we sometimes want to claim that satisfied seniors whose retirement involves nothing more elaborate than enjoying

[47] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1098a20).
[48] On the risks of conceiving of life as a career, with its emphasis on narrative unity and planning, see Margaret Urban Walker. "Getting Out of Line: Alternatives to Life as a Career." In *Mother Time: Women, Aging and Ethics.* Edited by Margaret Urban Walker. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
[49] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1100a1-5).

good company and playing an occasional game of shuffleboard are faring well at a time. This is true despite the fact that they might be unwilling or unable to reflect on their lives or make plans for the future. Granted, in both cases, shifting our evaluative focal point from moments to periods or lives may inform the welfare judgments that we make when we deny that the welfare subjects in these cases fare well. We might bemoan the fate of healthy toddlers who live in contexts that are likely to limit their access to future goods. Likewise, we might bemoan the fate of satisfied seniors who are content to play shuffleboard because they have reluctantly lost a battle with a debilitating mental illness. Still, we cannot neglect to provide an account of how well they fare at a time, however well we believe they fare over time.

These judgments are hardly peripheral cases that a coherent account of well-being can afford to discount unless we are willing to accept that an account that fully applies to only a handful of core human cases is the best we can do. One of the strengths of competing subjective accounts is the resources they can marshal in the service of a balanced account of faring well at a time, over a period, or over a life. For instance, subjectivists can claim that human beings tend to fare well if they manage a program of pleasure maximization or desire satisfaction over a life, but can deny that such a program is necessary for happy toddlers or satisfied seniors to fare well at a time. All that assessments of well-being at a time require are loose schedules of concerns of the kind captured by the formula, "Jarrod enjoys, desires, or has a pro-attitude to strawberry ice cream at time ***t****."* Subjectivists can also bemoan the future fate of underprivileged

toddlers, who are likely to find it difficult to pursue successfully even modest schedules of concern in the future, or the fate of satisfied seniors, who have lost the capacity to regret their cognitive decline and would have wanted their lives to turn out differently.

A descriptively adequate account of well-being cannot focus exclusively on adult capacities or concerns. It should be attentive to the variety of both welfare subjects and welfare judgments. It should capture what faring well consists in at different stages of a human life, be it childhood, adulthood, or senescence, and describe welfare judgments at a time, over a period, and over a life. Natural Law theorists might suggest that their account is perhaps narrower than they thought, but that this does not make it false for the entities to which it applies. However, this reply is available only if they are willing to limit the generality of their account, and apply it only to adult human beings at the height of their rational faculties. The move to weaken the importance of generality may be difficult in light of the normative account of human nature they rely on.

Objectivists might reply by weakening the requirement to express well-being in terms of a distinctive human function. For instance, Martha Nussbaum argues with Amartya Sen that faring well is a matter of capabilities and functionings.[50] *Functionings* are various states of human beings and activities that a person can undertake. Examples of states of beings are being well-

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[50] Martha Nussbaum holds the broadly Aristotelian view that we can root a distinctive human function in the exercise of our rational faculties. See "Nature, functioning and capability: Aristotle on political distribution." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume, 1988: 145-184. For a summary statement of Sen's more subjective view, see "Capability and Well-Being" in *The Quality of Life.* Edited by M. Nussbaum and A. Sen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993: 30-53.

nourished, being housed, being educated, being part of a supportive social network, and being happy. Examples of activities are travelling, caring for children, voting in an election, taking part in a debate, and donating money to charity. At a glance, the examples I cite are positive, but it is important to note that the notion of functionings is neutral in itself. In a sense, the goodness or badness of various functionings depend on the context which one endorses. For instance, a conservative, communitarian normative theory would likely identify the work of a mother who is caring for children and elderly parents as a valuable functioning, while a feminist theory might do so only if the functioning is the result of an autonomous choice made under suitable conditions. Conversely, c*apabilities* are a person's real freedoms or opportunities to achieve functionings. For instance, travelling is a functioning, and the real opportunity to travel is the capability. Functionings are to capabilities what the realized is to the possible. That is, the distinction is between achievements on one hand and opportunities on the other.

On this view, a person or group fares well when they are effectively able to perform valuable actions and achieve valuable states of being. The focus of the capabilities approach is on removing obstacles so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life which, upon consideration, they find valuable. The persuasiveness of this collaborative program hinges in part on identifying valuable actions and states of affairs that constitute human well-being, a step that is a matter of some controversy. Whether the capabilities approach counts as an objective or a subjective theory depends on how one identifies the valuable

functionings that constitute the basics of the theory. In some moods, Sen is willing to let schedules of concerns determine the decisive ranking of valuable functionings, which would make the capabilities approach a subjective theory.[51] Nussbaum consistently prefers a more objective reading of functions, and tends to ground them in a normative account of human nature. When pressed, however, even Nussbaum allows that settling on a single, distinctively human function is not essential to the program of finding a coherent account of human well-being.[52] While we may be unable or unwilling to describe a characteristic human function, we have little trouble gauging when humans are functioning well by standards appropriate to their kind.

Others writers go as far as to abandon appeals to normative accounts of human functioning altogether. They insist on the independent value of the goods on their favored list, but deny that an account of the property that unifies them is necessary or even possible. In his substantive good theory of well-being, for instance, Thomas Scanlon admits that certain goods make a life better, and that we are sometimes prepared to defend this claim with reasons. Yet Scanlon muses that a unified account of what makes things good for welfare subjects may be impossible. “It seems unlikely that there are any good-making properties which are common to all good things,” he writes, “If this is correct, there will be no general theory of goodness… [beyond] diverse arguments about why various

[51] For Sen’s ambivalence, see his “Capability and Well-Being,” in *The Quality of Life.* Edited by Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 31-33.
[52] See her “Non-relative virtues.” In *Quality of Life*. Edited by M. Nussbaum and A. Sen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

properties of particular objects make those objects good."[53] However, abandoning the project of providing an account that unifies welfare goods threatens the very detachment from subjectivity objectivists are trying to achieve. To be fair, objective theories can take some comfort in the fact that list theories tend to converge on a classic triad of objects, namely, truth, virtue, and beauty. We might hope that this convergence is evidence of truth, but it is difficult to imagine what might count as support for this claim. One possible strategy is to attempt to bring the arguments about various good-making properties into wide reflective equilibrium with the relevant moral and non-moral theories. If this is correct, then projects like the one undertaken here are a step in the right direction.[54]

Objectivists might reply by substituting a normative account of human function with a descriptive account of the basic needs essential to living a normal life. On this view, faring well consists in having basic needs like nourishment, exercise, rest, companionship, and personal security satisfied. This account is objective since the status of the needs in question is not conditional on the welfare subject's schedule of concerns.[55] However, the proposal violates the formality criterion. Identifying as objectively good the elements needed to live normal human lives runs the risk of confusing intrinsic welfare goods with the

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[53] See his "Values, Desire and Quality of Life" in *The Quality of Life.* Edited by Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 190-1. See also "Contractualism and Utilitarianism." In *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, edited by Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
[54] The triad is mentioned in William Frankena, *Ethics.* Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973, 88. Fred Feldman discusses convergence in theories of well-being in Feldman (2004).
[55] The list is David Baybrooke's. See his *Meeting Needs*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 31. For a more recent discussion, see Lawrence Hamilton. *The Political Philosophy of Needs.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

merely instrumental, and the nature of well-being with its likely sources. What nourishment, exercise, and rest have in common is not that we value them as constitutive parts of human well-being but that they enable its pursuit and are, at times, important sources of well-being. To see this, we need only consider the value of each element independently of its causes or consequences. When I consider nourishment on its own, I find that I value it instrumentally rather than intrinsically. It matters only because it allows me to pursue other things that matter intrinsically, be it pleasure, desire satisfaction, knowledge, achievement and so on. I eat because I enjoy a good meal, because it sates my appetite, because I need energy to live, work and play, but I do not eat merely for the sake of eating. We can make a similar case against accounts that equate faring well in part with securing items on a list of primary goods or with having others respect one's human rights.[56] As Aristotle recognized, some measure of external goods is naturally useful in pursuing well-being "since we cannot or cannot easily, do fine actions if we lack the resources."[57] However, we value these external goods as the means to pursue what really matters. A person's access to external goods can provide a proxy measurement of well-being, but it does not provide an account of its nature.

These thoughts on the general structure of objective theories do not comprise a decisive argument against the latter. Objectivists can reply to the

[56] Rawls famously identifies a set of primary goods, which constitute the basics required for the formation and pursuit of any rational plan of life. Note that Rawls proposes a rational desire theory of well-being, which counts as a subjective rather than an objective account. John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, 92-3. For an argument that human rights should figure on a list of constitutive welfare goods, see Partha Dasgupta. *An Enquiry into Well-Being and Destitution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, chapter 1.
[57] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099b.

narrowness of their account by limiting its generality, applying the account only to entities whose well-being it captures fairly well. Likewise, they can reply to the lack of a justification of the goods that belong on a correct and complete list by assigning list membership tentatively and revising it when they have reason to do so. However, the most serious indictment of objective theories is not the claims they advance but those they deny. Suppose objective theories can produce a suitable metaphysical apparatus to justify the normative judgments they make. The mark of such theories remains the denial of agent sovereignty, which commits them to the denial that one's schedule of concerns alone determines one's well-being. To some extent, it also commits them to the substitution of that schedule of concerns with an independent standard of value. Goods have welfare value, not because subjects value them, but because they are independently good for subjects. In trying to place well-being assessments on secure footing, objectivists break the connection between its nature and the person whose well-being is in question. It is no longer strictly necessary for the objects in one's life to engage one's active interest, attention, and care in order for one to fare well. If this is right, then a person can fare well despite the fact that he does not endorse the conditions of his life provided they relate suitably to independently valuable objects. The implication is controversial enough to challenge the acceptance of objective accounts. Call this the problem of *authority*.

Objectivists may respond by seeking common ground. They might grant that schedules of concern are often a reliable source of well-being, and that one's

experience and desires matter, even if they are not the only things that matter. Thus, they might concede that the subjective elements of rival theories are also objectively valuable, and argue for their inclusion on their list of favoured goods. On this view, subjective theories identify one important respect in which we can fare well: hedonists single out pleasant experiences; and desire theorists, getting what you (rationally) want. The mistake subjectivists make is building an account of well-being around a single basic good. Enjoyable experiences and desire satisfaction have welfare value, but they are only a few among many goods that share this status. For instance, Richard Arneson adds enjoyment and desire satisfaction to an objective list account in order to give them at least some role to play in well-being. However, he denies that one must either enjoy or desire the objects in one's life in order to fare well.[58] Thus, one fares well if one's life contains objectively valuable objects, including, among others, knowledge, achievement, desire satisfaction, and experiences of pleasure. This strategy can accommodate a diversity of good lives since what matters is not which basic good one chooses to instantiate but that one responds fully to those one does instantiate.

The reply fails to address the problem of authority, however. On the revised account, schedules of concerns do not yet restrict the sort of lives that count as good for the person who lives that life. Since there is no constraint on the goods one's life instantiates, it is still possible to assess that one fares well though one remains subjectively alienated from the goods in one's life. What

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[58] "Human Florishing versus Desire Satisfaction," *Social Philosophy and Policy.* 16 (1999): 42-43.

matters is only that one's life relate to valuable objects. One need not like, want, or respond positively to the goods one relates to in order to benefit from them. Moreover, one can fare well even if one's life is devoid of pleasure or desire satisfaction provided one relate suitably to other basic goods. Simply insisting that one's life contain at least *some* pleasure or desire satisfaction does not go far enough.

This response to objective theories is not bad as far as it goes. However, it implies that objective goods by themselves do not count towards well-being. This is difficult to accept. In effect, the problem of authority puts us in a double bind: if we accept the agent sovereignty thesis and the endorsement thesis, we seem committed to the claim that unendorsed objective goods are worthless in welfare terms. They might not count for much, but why not think objective goods count for a bit? Suppose Richard's life relates suitably to independently valuable objects but is otherwise devoid of pleasure or desire satisfaction. A depressed artist, he spends his days working at the Smithsonian cleaning and stabilizing works of art, a calling arguably of great value but one that he no longer enjoys or desires. The problem of authority implies that we do not suddenly rescue him from desolation by plugging him into a pleasure machine for an hour at the end of each day. Richard's case is tragic precisely because he is not faring well despite the fact that his life contains much in it that is independently valuable, a judgment that objective theories do not capture. However, it seems unreasonable to claim that objective goods by themselves fail to count towards well-being. Given the choice of two lives, each of which Richard equally fails to endorse, it must be the

case that Richard fares better in the life that contains objective goods than in the one that does not.

The problem of authority challenges us to move beyond the additive thesis. It arises when theories deny the structural role that one's concerns play in defining what faring well consists in. Given that schedules of concerns can be more or less structured, the problem is especially important in cases where one has a firm and steady schedule of concerns. If this is correct, then the problem of authority will have a scalar dimension, making trouble for some cases more than for others. However, even cases involving relatively loose and variable schedules will confront the problem to some extent. Objective theories fail to recognize that the engagement of one's active interest, attention, and care has a role to play in delineating one's well-being. What is needed is an account in which schedules of concerns restrict what counts as good for a person, one that assesses that Richard fares well only if he enjoys or desires the very goods that he is fortunate enough to have in his life. At the same time, it is difficult to accept that one part of well-being has no welfare value in the absence of the other. In the case of the depressed artist, for instance, it seems unreasonable that objective goods by themselves fail to count towards Richard's well-being. Plausible solutions to the problem of authority must take into consideration both concerns.

2.3 Worth

Subjective theories are perhaps the most venerable accounts of well-being. Subjectivists claim that a person's well-being depends only on his

concerns, and deny that the objects of these concerns have further value that bears on well-being. Where objectivists deny the agent sovereignty thesis, subjectivists affirm it: one's schedule of concerns alone determines one's well-being. As Sumner puts it, over his well-being, the adult subject is sovereign, at least under suitable conditions.[59]

Traditional taxonomies divide the general class of subjective theories into two kinds: hedonistic and desire theories. Hedonists claim that well-being consists in experiencing surplus pleasure. On this first view, the property that makes a state of affairs intrinsically good for a person at a time is *being an episode of pleasure*. The property that makes a state of affairs intrinsically bad for a person at a time is *being an episode of pain*. *Internalists* about pleasure define faring well in terms of a distinctive feeling that all pleasant experiences share. Unfortunately, describing the exact nature of this feeling is difficult.[60] *Externalists* about pleasure define faring well in terms of a feeling that is wanted or desired by the individual who experiences it.[61] Conversely, desire theorists claim that well-being consists in getting what we want. On this second view, the properties that make a state of affairs intrinsically good for a person at a time are *being a satisfied object of desire*. The only properties that make a state of affairs intrinsically bad for a person at a time are *being a frustrated object of desire*.

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[59] "When [an affirmation of the conditions of her life] is based on a clear view of those conditions, we have no grounds for questioning or challenging its authority: in this respect, the individual is sovereign over her well-being." Sumner (1996): 160.

[60] Griffin (1986): 8; Sumner (1996): 92-3; Thomas Carson. *Value and the Good Life* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2000), 13-4; Justin Gosling. *Pleasure and Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 37-40.

[61] For instance, see Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life,* 85, 119; Sumner, "Feldman's Hedonism," *The Good, the Right, Life and Death*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Hedonists and desire theorists can combine their account of faring well at a time with any view of aggregation they like, which will produce an account of faring well over a period or on the whole. Typically, hedonists sum episodes of pleasure over time, with more intense episodes of greater duration counting for more than shorter, less intense ones. Likewise, desire theorists sum the satisfaction of discrete desires, with more intense desires counting for more than less intense ones.

To situate the problem of worth, it might be helpful to rehearse some alternative accounts of each kind of subjective theory, along with some familiar claims about their shortcomings. Suppose we start with hedonism. As I mentioned, hedonists satisfy both the generality and the strong neutrality criteria for descriptive adequacy.[62] Since the capacity to feel pleasure and pain is ubiquitous, hedonists capture all core subjects of welfare assessments, from the animal to the human, the fetus to the senior. Moreover, their recommendations always align with the welfare subject's concerns, but only if psychological hedonism is true.

I argued that hedonists achieve these results only by violating the fidelity criterion for descriptive adequacy. It seems incredible to suppose that, for any welfare subject, the capacity to feel and forecast pain and pleasure are the only features relevant to one's well-being, or to suppose that one can always reduce one's various concerns to the pursuit of pleasure. The hedonist's claim may be true of foetuses or the family dog, but it is less clearly true of high-functioning

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[62] See sections 1.3 and 2.2.

adult humans. Likewise, insisting that experiencing surplus pleasure contributes to one's well-being *whatever one's concerns* violates strong neutrality and the agent sovereignty thesis. It is no longer the case that one's schedule of concerns alone determines one's well-being. This objection effectively marks hedonism as an objective-list theory of well-being with a single good on its list. Hedonists can respond to these objections by limiting the generality of their account, applying it only to entities whose well-being it captures fairly well. For instance, the claim that well-being consists in surplus pleasure is most plausible in the case of the happy toddler or the satisfied senior, where the objects of one's pleasure matters less to how well one fares at a time. However, hedonists can reach for this response only by yielding tacitly to rival theories of well-being in cases where their own approach violates fidelity.

Now, the claim that well-being consists in experiencing surplus pleasure raises at least two questions: What is pleasure? Does well-being consist uniquely in experiencing surplus pleasure? An adequate account of the nature of pleasure is essential since pleasure is likely to play at least some role in our conception of well-being, whatever view we defend. However, the anti-hedonist arguments hinge chiefly on the second question. Suppose hedonists can specify a descriptively adequate account of pleasure, one that coheres well with our various pre-analytic beliefs about pleasure. Can hedonists make good on the central claim that well-being consists *uniquely* in experiencing pleasure? A powerful objection to hedonism is the claim that they cannot.

We can reach this conclusion by noticing first that all hedonistic theories essentially place an experience requirement on well-being. If hedonism is true, then welfare subjects must experience pleasure in some sense in order to benefit. Now, imagine Tom, an executive who dies content, thinking that his family loves him, and that his colleagues respect him; in fact, his family secretly despised him, and his colleagues only pretended to like him for their benefit, though he never knew the truth of it.[63] In thinking about his life, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that mental states are not all that matter to our well-being. If mental states are all that matter, then what we do not know cannot harm or benefit us. However, it seems that what we do not know *can* harm or benefit us. Therefore, mental states are not all that matter. Since hedonistic theories impose an experience requirement on well-being, they fail to recognize that things other than our experiences matter to our well-being.

Hedonists might reply that the assessment that Tom is not faring well rests in part on the suspicion that he will likely find out the truth and be devastated, or that the deception would otherwise color the relationships that are important to him. On this view, we are letting the allegedly poor quality of his personal relationships, or the pain we imagine he will experience when he finds out, undermine our judgment of how well he is faring now. This reply will not assuage critics, however. They insist that we can imagine a case where Tom does not find out about the deception and, we are assuming, the deception does not color his experience. He thought his partner was faithful, but she was not. Even if he never

[63] Thomas Nagel. *Mortal Questions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, 1 – 10.

learns the truth, the deception diminishes his well-being because a facet of his life about which he cared deeply failed to work out the way he wanted. For hedonists, the external state of affairs cannot make Tom's experience less valuable because it does not affect his mental states, but mental states are not all that matter. The best explanation of this is that hedonism cannot be the whole story.

The case of Tom might move us to accept a desire theory of well-being. The reason poor Tom is not faring well is that he is not getting what he really wants. What Tom wanted was the love of his family and the respect of his colleagues, and while it seemed that he had their esteem, he was mistaken. Desire theories differ from their hedonistic counterparts in two important respects. First, they are concerned not only with mental states but also with the obtaining of external states of affairs beyond the mind. Desire theorists assert that faring well consists in getting what we want, and what we want is not limited to experiencing pleasure and avoiding pain. On this account, a life spent hooked up to an experience machine that replicated the mental states associated with enjoying what we most desired would be a life low in well-being.[64] Whether we want to meet interesting people, have intimate relationships, or attain complex goals, we want more than the pleasant mental states that come with the belief that these states of affairs obtain. We actually want them to obtain. Second, desire theorists break the connection between experience and well-being. A desire is satisfied much like the clause in a contract is satisfied. In both cases,

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[64] See Robert Nozick, *State, Anarchy, and Utopia.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974, 42-45.

satisfaction occurs if the relevant state of affairs obtains.[65] This implies that a person can benefit from a state of affairs even if he does not experience gratification or know it obtains. In some cases, we may prefer that states of affairs obtain even if we never know they do or we never experience the mental states associated with their obtaining. Given the choice, for instance, parents may prefer that their child have a successful life even if, for some reason, they never learn of their child's success.[66]

The simplest desire theories are unrestricted accounts, which claim that getting what one wants *always* makes an intrinsic contribution to one's well-being. As we have seen, unrestricted desire theories satisfy the generality criterion and the strong neutrality criterion for descriptive adequacy.[67] In the case of generality, the argument is similar in structure to the argument for the generality of hedonism. Since appetition is ubiquitous, unrestricted desire theories capture all core subjects of welfare assessments, from the animal to the human, the fetus to the senior. Likewise, since they identify faring well with the satisfaction of the welfare subject's desires, the evaluation of a good rests squarely with the welfare subject's concerns, which implies the truth of the agent sovereignty thesis: one's schedule of concerns alone determines one's well-being.[68] However, unrestricted accounts must contend with two problems of their own: the problem of scope and the problem of mistaken desires.

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[65] See Griffin (1986): chapter 1.
[66] See Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, 495-6.
[67] Note that this is true only on the view that what is good for you is the satisfaction of *actual* desires.
[68] See section 1.3.

Consider the problem of scope. Suppose that Derek desires that a stranger he met briefly fare well.[69] Though the stranger fares well, Derek never thinks of him again and never knows his fate. It seems incredible that the unwitting satisfaction of this desire should benefit Derek, but if we accept the unrestricted account, we are committed to the view that the satisfaction of even this desire contributes to his well-being. The problem of scope arises because of the intentionality of desires and the notion of satisfaction at work.[70] Desires are directed at contingent states of affairs, which may not be contiguous to the subject in time and space, and some states of affairs obtain without a noticeable effect on the subject. These two features of desire theories explain what goes wrong in the case of Tom: in so far as he was deceived, the object of his desire failed to obtain and he did not fare as well as he thought, even if he never learned of the deception or experienced the truth of it. As the case of Derek illustrates, however, many other states of affairs obtain without a noticeable effect on subjects, and at least some of them seem immaterial to their well-being. The problem of scope implies a violation of the fidelity criterion of descriptive adequacy. The deliverances of unrestricted desire theories do not cohere well with our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being.

Desire theorists might reply by admitting that the set of desires whose satisfaction is relevant to well-being on the unrestricted account is too broad. On this view, desire theorists need a principled way to identify the set of desires whose satisfaction bears on a person's well-being. In effect, this response

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[69] Derek Parfit. *Reasons and Persons. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984,* 494.
[70] On the intentionality of desires, Sumner (1996): 124-5.

narrows desire accounts to a set of cases in which subjects satisfy a subset of desires that ostensibly bear on well-being. One strategy involves giving prominence to desires that have a more central place in a person's life. For instance, we can stress the importance of long-standing, identity-conferring desires, desires that unify a greater number of minor desires, or desires that are explicitly about one's own life. A full discussion of the implications of the scope problem would take us far afield, but note that proposals point to the role the structural features of a state of affairs play in determining its bearing on a person's well-being. Identifying the set of relevant desires is a matter of determining not only whether a desired outcome obtains but also whether it relates suitably to other aspects of a person's life.

Next, consider the problem of mistaken desires. Even when their content is "about us" in some sense, our actual desires can themselves be impulsive or misinformed. Simply put, what one actually wants does not reliably track one's well-being. The literature is replete with grisly cases: I want to drink a glass of poison mistakenly thinking it is orange juice; I want to drive home drunk; I want to end my life during a depressive spell; I want a treatment I falsely believe will cure my illness; I want to smoke cigarettes though I know they are addictive and cause cancer. In these cases, merely getting what I want does not make my life intrinsically better. Desire theorists might reply that the satisfaction of each desire is good in itself but not overall. Each desire frustrates other desires, perhaps, like the desire not to be addicted to smoking. However, it simply seems incredible to claim that the satisfaction of these desires contributes to a person's well-being *at*

all. Once again, desire theories seem to breach the fidelity criterion of descriptive adequacy: their deliverances simply do not cohere well with our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being.

Instead of counting the satisfaction of our actual desires – which might be wrong-headed – desire theorists suggest that perhaps we should pursue the satisfaction of the subset of desires we would have if we were fully informed and thinking clearly. The idea is to analyze actual desires from a counterfactual standpoint that uniquely captures in formal terms what is good for a person. Peter Railton suggests that

> an individual's good consists in what he would want himself to want, or to pursue were he to contemplate his present situation from a standpoint fully and vividly informed about himself and his circumstances, and entirely free of cognitive error or lapses of instrumental rationality.[71]

The desires of these ideal advisors, our cognitively ideal counterparts, fix the set of desires the satisfaction of which constitutes our well-being. Well-being might then consist in the satisfaction of what we might call "ideal desires."

At a glance, we can make two initial observations on ideal desire theories. First, abbreviating the set of desires to those formed under suitable conditions need not violate strong neutrality.[72] The recommendations of informed desire theories do conflict, at times, with the agent's present concerns. However, informed desire theories accept the subject's concerns as normative for their

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[71] Peter Railton, "Facts and Values." In *Facts, Values and Norms.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 54.
[72] See section 1.3.

well-being, and only impose procedural conditions to deal with problems with its implementation. Although they insist that a subject's concerns manifest a rational structure, the evaluation of a good rests on those concerns alone. Second, insisting on reducing well-being to the satisfaction of ideal desires seems to violate generality. Not all welfare subjects are able to form or approximate ideal desires. It makes little sense to speak of my border collie's well-being in terms of the satisfaction of the set of desires he would form under suitable conditions since there is no possible world in which he is able to perform this complex cognitive feat. Again, ideal desire theorists might grant the narrowness of their account by limiting its generality, applying the account only to entities whose well-being it captures fairly well.

The times have not been kind to ideal desire theories. A first set of worries question whether the outcome of the idealization process is predictable enough to yield reliable advice.[73] Perhaps running the gauntlet would sow in my ideal advisor a deep aversion to my personality type so that his advice would be hostile. Perhaps it would alter his personality so deeply that I would no longer hold the desires of this very different person as normatively relevant to my own well-being. A second set of worries questions the coherence of the process. It seems unlikely that one could even become as fully informed as the ideal advisor account requires.[74] Ideal desire theorists generally reply to these worries by striving to find a principled way to specify the idealization process. Griffin's own contextual account stipulates that a desire "be formed by appreciation of the

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[73] Connie Rosati. "Internalism and the Good for a Person." *Ethics* 106 (1996): 297-326.
[74] David Sobel, "Full-information Accounts of Well-Being." *Ethics* 104 (1994): 784-810.

nature of its object, and it includes anything necessary to achieve it."[75] Griffin admits that the proposal is at once less determinate and less ambitious than Railton's seminal account. Achieving an appreciation of the object may require much less than full information and perfect rationality, a feature of his view that Griffin deems advantageous.[76]

Once we move to an ideal desire theory, however, the appeal to desires seems either insufficient for well-being or redundant. First, there is no guarantee that even ideal desires would track well-being, since it might simply be a psychological fact about a given subject that their ideal desires fail to track objective goodness.[77] Consider John, a brilliant mathematician who is as rational and informed as ideal desire theorists would like. He could contribute to important problems in his field but instead develops a strong desire to count blades of grass on the lawns of his local university, and devotes his life to the enterprise, from which he derives great pleasure.[78] Ideal desire theorists are committed to the view that John is faring well provided he formed his desire under suitable conditions. This is difficult to accept. They might reply that the idealization process would rule out grass counting as a defective desire, but it is not clear what procedural mistake John is making. In such cases, the appeal to ideal desires seems insufficient. Even ideal desire theories, it seems, violate the fidelity criterion for descriptive adequacy.

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[75] Griffin (1986): 14.
[76] James Griffin. *Value Judgments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 26.
[77] For an instance of this objection, see Richard Arneson, "Human Florishing v. Desire Satisfaction," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16 (1999).
[78] John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, 432.

Second, even if we grant that ideal desires track well-being, what matters now is not that a given object is wanted but that it is worth wanting. In such cases, the appeal to desires seems redundant. Since ideal desires track independent value, it is trivially true to say something is good for us only if we would prefer it under ideal circumstances. Where ideal desire theories go wrong is in assuming that it is the fact that we want those things under ideal circumstances that makes them good for us to have. What matters is not the fact that John desires the object but that his desire reflects an *appreciation* of the nature of its object, that is, recognition of its good qualities, value, or significance. In effect, ideal desire theorists violate the formality criterion, confusing the nature of well-being with the objects that reliably produce it. We may benefit from having objects we would want under suitable conditions, yet wanting itself has no part in the nature of well-being.

For some, this is enough to tip the scales toward objective theories. However, instead of returning to theories that explain well-being uniquely in terms of the value of objects, we might opt to construct a subjective account from the salvage of hedonistic and desire theories. Theories that pursue this middle way are committed to addressing the difficult cases that subjective theories face without moving to an objective view that would appeal to the value of objects. Like their subjective counterparts, theories in this set affirm the agent sovereignty thesis, the claim that a person's schedule of concerns alone determines one's well-being, and they reject the claim that the objects of those concerns have further value that bears on well-being.

The chief weakness of subjective theories is that they violate the formality criterion of descriptive adequacy. Each picks out an important source of well-being, and gives a lucid account of the sector of our lives in which it best applies. I have tried to show that this weakness is the same in each case: each account violates the fidelity criterion in the sector of our lives covered by its rivals, and salvages its credibility only by limiting the generality of the account. Sumner's theory of authentic happiness is a good example of theories of well-being that pursue a conciliatory argumentative strategy. He proposes a hybrid approach that explains the property that these goods have in common that makes them reliable sources of well-being.

Authentic happiness draws on different parts of competing subjective theories to formulate something in between hedonism and desire theories. Like hedonism, authentic happiness ties the nature of well-being to psychological responses; like desire theories, it imposes procedural constraints to eliminate those responses that do not track well-being. Happiness has an affective and a cognitive component. "The cognitive aspect of happiness," writes Sumner, "is a positive evaluation of the conditions of your life, a judgment that, at least on balance, it measures up favourably against your standards or expectations."[79] This evaluation constitutes an affirmation of the conditions of one's life according to criteria of one's own devising, a judgment that, on the whole and taking everything in consideration, life is going well. Meanwhile, "the affective side of happiness," he writes, "consists in what we commonly call a sense of well-being:

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[79] Wayne Sumner. *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, 145.

finding your life enriching or rewarding, or feeling satisfied or fulfilled by it."[80] The affective side of Sumner's account of happiness incorporates an experience requirement, which he recommends as "the important insight in classical hedonism."[81] One benefits from a state of affairs only if it positively affects the quality of one's experience.

The cognitive and affective components of happiness together constitute endorsement, which is only part of the story of what faring well consists in. Whatever else is true, one fares well only if one's endorsement is *authentic*; that is, only if one's endorsement accurately reflects one's point of view. If welfare subjects are poorly informed about their circumstances, or if their standards are a function of external manipulation, then they are not faring well even if they endorse the conditions of their life.[82] Endorsements are sufficiently informed when more information would not make a difference to the welfare subjects' response to their life given their ideals and concerns.[83] Endorsements are autonomous when there is no reason to believe that they have been influenced by mechanisms that erode the welfare subjects' capacity to reflect critically on their values, standards, and expectations.[84] Only when endorsements are authentic – when they are informed and autonomous – do they count towards well-being.

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[80] Sumner (1996): 146.
[81] Sumner (1996): 128.
[82] Sumner (1996): 172.
[83] Sumner (1996): 160.
[84] Sumner (1996): 171.

Sumner's middle way, then, meets the two conditions that a theory must satisfy to count as a subjective theory. First, it affirms the agent sovereignty thesis. One's schedule of concerns alone determines one's well-being provided one's endorsements are authentic. Second, it denies that the object of these concerns have further value. The constraints he proposes for authentic happiness offer no substantive critique of the endorsements in play, nor do they suggest that one's ends have independent value that bears on one's well-being. In fact, the procedural constraints empower rather than impede agent sovereignty, allowing third-party judgments to override one's endorsements only when there is reason to believe that they do not truly represent one's point of view.

The resulting account has plausible implications for tests cases. First, authentic happiness entails that mental states are not the only thing that matters. Schedules of concerns range over both states of the mind and state of the world. If knowing that his worldly successes are beholden to an experience machine would change Robert's endorsement of the conditions of his life, then Robert is not faring well after all. He does not benefit from his endorsement of the experiences the machine constructs because his endorsement does not accurately reflect his concern that his experiences connect with reality in the right way. With the necessary changes, the same goes for the case of Tom. If learning that his partner and colleagues are insincere would change his endorsement of the conditions of his life, then he is not faring well however pleasant his mental states. Then again, if knowing the relevant information would *not* change the

relevant endorsements in these two cases, then the two men fare well, whatever else critics of subjective theories might claim. Hence, authentic happiness complies fairly well with the fidelity criterion for descriptive adequacy.

However, even this most plausible subjective view is susceptible to the problem of worth. Whatever subjective theory we choose to pursue will affirm the agent sovereignty thesis and deny the independent value of one's concerns. Persons do not value welfare goods because they are good for them; welfare goods are good for persons because they value them. In describing welfare value exclusively in terms of psychological facts, subjectivists are committed to the view that all objects of concerns are on equal axiological footing. All pleasures are equally valuable as such, no desire is better in itself than another is; no standard is more worthy of concern than another is. If this is right, then one can fare well despite the fact that one takes pleasure in worthless pleasures and desires, and one's standards miss the mark. The implication is controversial enough to challenge the acceptance of subjective accounts of well-being.

The problem arises in part because it is difficult to shake the intuition that there is more to well-being than bare psychological facts. The worth of the objects of one's concerns also matter. Yet procedural constraints alone do not ensure that a person's pleasures, desires, or standards track the worth of the objects of one's concerns. What is missing from the subjectivist's assessment of John's rational desire to count blades of grass is an appraisal of the object of his desire. The trouble is not that his response is poorly informed, unreasonable, or unduly quirky, but that it fails to take into account the assessment that blade

counting is nearly worthless. In raising the problem of worth, it is important to hold in abeyance judgments concerning the normative adequacy of subjective theories. The trouble is not that subjective theories of well-being conflict with a favored account of the right. Rather, they fail to provide a descriptively adequate account of the nature of well-being. Simply put, there is more to well-being than is captured in schedules of concerns. Still, it is possible to overstate the case for worth. Like the problem of authority, the problem of worth will have a scalar dimension, making more trouble for cases in which the worth of the objects of one's concerns is salient. We might assess, for instance, that worth has little bearing on how well the happy toddler or the contented senior fares at a time, yet insist that the grass counter does not fare well given the worth of the objects of their concerns.

Subjectivists might reply that we are letting our concerns about John's sanity cloud our assessment of the welfare value of his activities. When we place these concerns aside, we can see that such activities are not intrinsically harmful for the people who choose to engage in them. In fact, to the extent that subjects liked or want them, they are beneficial. We may have justified moral qualms about leading these lives. We may think that those who live them could do something more useful for others, but these reasons do not impugn their welfare value for those who live them. There is room for reasonable doubt, however. Recall that well-being is not only the foundation for rational decisions in which only personal interests are concerned; it also captures what we have reason to promote for the sake of others. Even if we grant that the subjectivists' replies

address the kinds of welfare judgments we make in the first instance, it is not obvious that they address those we make in the second. It is difficult to imagine recommending the life of the grass-counter to others because of a nagging sense that the grass-counter does not fare as well as he could fare. Our concerns are not all that matters to our well-being. In some cases, the worth of the object of those concerns also matters.

Elements of this problem are almost as old as subjective theories themselves, and motivate, among others views, John Stuart Mill's distinction between higher and lower pleasures. "It is quite compatible with the principle of utility," Mill famously writes, "that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others." If all or almost all of those who are competently acquainted with two pleasures agree in preferring one to another, then "we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account."[85] Mill's distinction is replete with conceptual problems, not the least of which involves trying to formulate a concept of pleasure that makes sense of the claim that higher pleasures are more valuable to those who experience them. Nothing in the problem of worth itself commits us to Mill's account of qualitative pleasures, however. All that is wanted is the recognition that, in some cases, a descriptively adequate conception of well-being must account for the intuition that the worth of the objects that subjects pursue matters.

[85] John Stuart Mill, *Collected Works*, Vol. X. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969, 211.

Ironically, where subjective theories of well-being err is in a well-meaning but diffident respect for the autonomy of persons. As we have seen, the subjectivity of well-being can seem to be a matter of self-ownership: over himself, over his well-being, the individual is sovereign. In this sense, self-interested choices and the normative assessment of outcomes rest squarely on the person's schedule of concerns. No other reference group is more relevant, no other norm more authoritative, provided the schedule of concerns is formed under suitable conditions. In effect, the subjectivist imposes an information constraint on welfare judgments: information about the axiological status of the object of a person's concerns is (directly) irrelevant to whether he is faring well. To brook an independent value requirement is to impose alien values on individuals, and to compromise the main strength of subjective theories, namely, that they treat individuals as the final authorities on their well-being under suitable conditions.[86]

Certainly, addressing the problem of worth involves formulating an independent value requirement that makes sense of the notion that some objects are more worthy of concern than other objects without succumbing to the problem of authority. A successful response should not collapse into an objective account; that is, it should not alienate the welfare subject from his own well-being or reduce welfare value to a rival dimension of value. Moreover, it should address concerns over perceived violations of weak neutrality. As daunting as formulating such an account may seem, it is worth remembering that subjectivity alone is, in

[86] For similar objections, see Sumner (1992), Sumner (1996), and Sumner (2006).

some cases, an insufficient metric for well-being. Specifically, it cannot adequately deal with cases in which subjects seem not to fare as well as they could despite the fact that their responses are formed under suitable conditions. In trying to respect unusual but worthy forms of life, subjectivists seem to capture common but worthless ones.

However, the problem of worth puts us in a double bind of its own: if we reject the agent sovereignty thesis and the endorsement thesis, we seem committed to the claim that concerns alone do not count towards well-being. This too is difficult to accept. Subjects may fare best when worthy goods figure on their schedule of concerns, but why not think their concerns alone counts at least to some extent? The problem of worth implies that John does not fare as well as he might if he concerned himself with a more worthy object. However, it seems unreasonable to claim that his concerns by themselves fail to count towards well-being at all. Given the choice of two lives in which John fails to concern himself with worthy objects, it must be the case that John fares better in the life in which he endorses the conditions of his life than the one in which he does not.

The problem of worth arises when subjective theories deny the role that the worth of a person's concerns plays in defining what faring well consists in. Any account that discounts information concerning whether the ends a person pursues are worthwhile fails to capture an important dimension of the welfare judgments we actually make. At the same time, it is difficult to accept that one part of well-being has no welfare value in the absence of the other. In the case of the grass-counter, for instance, it seems unreasonable that endorsement by itself

fails to count towards John's well-being. Plausible solutions to the problem of worth must take into consideration both concerns.

2.4 Conclusion

One might worry that the problem of authority and the problem of worth are no more than products of our description of the central conflict between subjective and objective theories of well-being. Surely, everyone appreciates that schedules of concerns have an important place in well-being, and that we tend to want and enjoy the objects on typical lists of independently valuable goods. This worry misconstrues the issue. The longevity of the Euthyphro dilemma and the ease with which each side constructs a general case against the other speaks to the salience of the subjective-objective distinction. What matters to disputants on each side of the divide is not that the best account of well-being finds *some* role for these elements but that these elements play a *central* role in well-being.

One recurring theme in the story of well-being is that we are often tempted to sacrifice fidelity to generality. As objections persuade theorists to refine and clarify their view, each can reply that their favored theory of well-being gives a lucid account of what faring well consists in for the entities whose well-being it best captures, even if it fails to capture what faring well consists in for all core subjects. Generality gives way to fidelity. We must take care lest the solution we propose sacrifice fidelity for generality in the same way. We should strive to formulate a formal theory flexible enough to satisfy both criteria.

Another recurring theme is that it is difficult to accept that the subjective and objective parts of well-being have no welfare value. In the case of the depressed artist, it seems unreasonable that objective goods by themselves fail to count towards Richard's well-being at least to some extent. They might not count for much in the absence of Richard's endorsement, but why not think objective goods count for something? Similarly, in the case of the grass-counter, it seems unreasonable that desire satisfaction by itself fails to count towards John's well-being. He might fare better if he desired a more worthy object, but why not think his desire satisfaction counts for something? In suggesting solutions to the problem of authority and the problem of worth, we must bear these themes in mind.

Chapter 3: Well-Being and Endorsement

3.1 Introduction

We now turn to the problem of authority. The greatest obstacle for objectivists is their reluctance to grant that endorsing an object is necessary for that object to confer a benefit on the subject. This reluctance alienates subjects from their own well-being. The case of Richard is tragic precisely because he is not faring very well despite the fact that his life contains much that is independently valuable. We must take the risk of alienation seriously. To deal with the problem of authority, we need an account that affirms the importance of relating to objects that engage one's active interest, attention, and care without denying the possible bearing of the worth of those objects on one's well-being. The account must address the problem of authority without sacrificing fidelity to generality, and it must accommodate the intuition that objective goods count toward well-being to some extent even in the absence of endorsement.[87]

In this chapter, I argue that addressing the problem of authority requires that we recognize that, in central cases, endorsement is necessary for well-being. A descriptively adequate theory of well-being should incorporate the endorsement thesis: that is, it should grant that, in the central case, the possession of some good contributes to one's well-being only if one endorses it under suitable conditions. As we shall see at the end of the chapter, the caveat is necessary to deal with the double bind problem. Specifically, it is necessary to

[87] I specify the aspects of generality with which I am concerned in the conclusion of the preceding chapter.

build a theory of well-being in a way that escapes the conclusion that either the subjective or the objective parts of well-being do not contribute to well-being on their own.

In section 3.2, I formulate a pluralistic model of endorsement. I argue that subjective theories seem intuitive largely because of a more general agreement concerning the intrinsic importance of such endorsement.

In section 3.3, I discuss what best explains this agreement. An experience of endorsement is constituted in part by a distinctive evaluative attitude that captures the intrinsic importance of such experiences to one's well-being. This evaluative attitude is consistent with the agent-relativity of welfare claims.

In section 3.4, I consider objections to making welfare value depend on the subject's endorsement. I argue that, in central cases, endorsement is necessary for welfare, and that objectively good states of affairs one does not endorse contribute at least to some extent to one's welfare. I suggest that the two claims together commit us to a discontinuity in welfare value between what I call "full fare" and "low fare." A discontinuity in value is a sharp break between the welfare contributions of different kinds of welfare goods such that no amount of one good can ever be more valuable than some finite amount of another good. In the central case, faring well involves both endorsement and goods. Call the great contribution that endorsement and worth make together "full fare." It is also true that endorsement on its own counts toward well-being, though it counts for less than the unity. Call the small contribution that endorsement makes on its own "low fare." The discontinuity in welfare value between low fare and full fare is

necessary to deal with the double bind problem without abandoning the endorsement thesis.

3.2 Endorsement

The problem of authority arises from the denial of the agent sovereignty thesis. The *agent sovereignty thesis* holds that one's schedule of concerns alone determines one’s well-being. Since objectivists believe that the axiological status of the objects of one’s concerns does not depend on their inclusion in one’s schedule of concerns, they must reject the claim that one’s schedule of concerns alone determines one’s well-being. The rejection of the agent sovereignty thesis in turn suggests the denial of the *endorsement thesis*. The endorsement thesis holds that, in central cases, one must endorse a good in order for that good to contribute to one’s well-being. If one’s schedule of concerns alone does not determine one’s well-being, then perhaps one need not endorse a good in order for that good to contribute to one’s well-being. Once one rejects the endorsement thesis, the spectre of alienation is not far behind.

One possible response to the problem of authority is to hold the agent sovereignty thesis in abeyance and mount a defence of the endorsement thesis. One can hold that endorsement is necessary for well-being in central cases without conceding that schedules of concerns alone determine one’s well-being. One might insist that the concerns of welfare subjects are not merely additional welfare goods that contribute to how well one fares overall, but also a condition for objects to contribute to one’s well-being, at least in most cases. The first move in this argumentative strategy is to describe the nature of endorsement.

Unfortunately, the precise nature of endorsement is contentious. Most welfare theorists agree that endorsement matters, but they disagree on what it consists in, whether it is a necessary condition for well-being, or whether it is merely a reliable source of well-being.

Endorsement captures the subjective part of well-being. It is tempting to define endorsement in terms of a single dimension, and argue for the most fitting description of this dimension.[88] This approach has not produced a conclusive account of endorsement. The literature contains three broad characterisations of the subjective dimension of well-being. The first two are hedonistic accounts of well-being; the third is an informed desire account. *Internalists* about pleasure define faring well in terms of a distinctive feeling that all pleasant experiences share. Unfortunately, describing the exact nature of this feeling is difficult.[89] *Externalists* about pleasure define faring well in terms of a feeling that is wanted or desired by the individual who experiences it**.**[90] Finally, desire theorists define faring well as a function of satisfied desire only to falter on the description of the set of desires whose satisfaction matters to one's well-being. None of the descriptions of the subjective dimension of well-being captures what faring well consists in for all core subjects, though each gives a lucid account of what faring well consists in for the entities whose well-being it best captures.[91]

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[88] For a survey of subjective accounts of well-being, see section 2.3.
[89] Griffin (1986): 8; Sumner (1996): 92-3; Thomas Carson. *Value and the Good Life* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2000), 13-4; Justin Gosling. *Pleasure and Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 37-40.
[90] For instance, see Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life,* 85, 119; Sumner, "Feldman's Hedonism," *The Good, the Right, Life and Death*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
[91] Section 2.4, page 68. I am indebted to Anthony Skelton for pressing the importance of this conciliatory claim.

Perhaps we should resist this reductive impulse. There is no reason to take as fact the claim that the many evaluative states that subjects experience necessarily reduce to a single shared property. Suppose we set out to construct an account of endorsement at a time that acknowledges the diversity of subjective evaluative states. One might say that one endorses an object when one *favours* it, a term chosen deliberately to capture the wide range of possible evaluative states that subjects experience. The favouring relation situates the subject's *orientation* toward a state of affairs along an evaluative dimension. If the subject favours a state of affairs, then he or she is positively oriented towards that states of affairs. If the subject holds a state of affairs in disfavour, then he or she is negatively oriented towards that state of affairs. Finally, if the subject neither favours a state of affairs nor holds it in disfavour, then he or she is neutrally oriented toward that state of affairs. What might the favouring relation include?

The hedonic quality of experience at a time is a natural first candidate. The great lesson of classical hedonism is that sensory pains and pleasures matter to one's well-being. Sensory pains and pleasures capture one's orientation toward eating strawberry ice cream or stepping barefoot on a child's toy. One fares well at a time to the extent that one experiences surplus sensory pleasure. However, the hedonic quality of experience at a time on its own is not an adequate account of favouring in all cases. There is more to favoring than experiencing sensory pleasure and avoiding sensory pain.

In some cases, one's orientation toward states of affairs that do *not* affect one's immediate sensory experience also matters. For instance, attitudinal pleasures differ in quality from sensory ones, yet their physiological and behavioral manifestations are no less important to well-being.[92] One can experience attitudinal pain and pleasure in anticipating or remembering a holiday, satisfying one's curiosity, performing a skilled task with virtuosity, or believing that a friend in a distant city is faring reasonably well. What these experiences share is not a common sensory quality but an attitudinal response on the part of the subject to a state of affairs that does not necessarily affect his or her sensory experience. One believes a state of affairs has occurred, is occurring, or will occur, and one is pleased or displeased that this is the case.[93] One fares well at a time to the extent that one is pleased with a given state of affairs. Just as the sensory quality of experience must figure in an adequate account of favouring, so too must the attitudinal responses to states of affairs that go beyond one's immediate experience.

Again, one's attitudinal responses at a time are not an adequate account of favouring on their own. This is the case for two reasons. First, the concept of attitudinal pleasures fails to explain simpler cases in which one's orientation toward an immediate state of affairs has a merely sensory quality. We might follow Feldman in claiming that all cases of sensory pleasure are also cases of

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[92] Michael Kubovy, "On the pleasures of the mind," *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*. D. Kahneman et al. (eds). New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, 1999, chapter 7; J. Elster and G. Lowenstein, "Utility from memory and anticipation," in J. Elster and G. Lowenstein (eds.), *Choice over time*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993, 213-24.
[93] Fred Feldman defines these experiences as attitudinal pleasures. "Two questions about pleasure," *Philosophical Analysis* (1988): 59-81. See also *Pleasure and the Good Life.* London: Oxford University Press, 2004.

attitudinal pleasure.[94] However, the move does not seem to do justice to our experience of sensory pleasures. My orientation toward eating strawberry ice cream or stepping barefoot on a child's toy has a subjective feel that goes beyond an attitudinal response. Second, the concept of attitudinal pleasures fails to capture cases in which one favours a state of affairs toward which one is not consciously oriented. For instance, subjects report being positively oriented (in hindsight) toward states of "flow," experiences in which both the sensory quality of experience and one's sense of self fade as one becomes engrossed in an activity.[95] The states of mind one experiences when engaged in engrossing athletic or creative activities, like long distance running or playing a musical instrument, are paradigmatic flow states. Such experiences involve an effacement of the self and a suspension of conscious experience. Unlike mere states of intense enjoyment, flow states tend to be enjoyed consciously only in hindsight. In the moment, flow states obtain without the sensory qualities of sensory pleasures or the complex evaluative and epistemic states typical of attitudinal pleasures. In order to favour a state of affairs in the latter sense, one must believe that the state of affairs obtains and assess it (at least tacitly) against criteria of one's own devising. Flow states are evidence that the evaluation of some stimuli can occur outside awareness, only to become accessible once the stimulus ends. An adequate account of favouring must capture these states as well.

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[94] See, for instance, his *Pleasure and the Good Life.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 79-81.

[95] M. Csikszentmihalyi. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper and Row, 1990.

Dispositional accounts of pleasure can inform the sense in which subjects endorse states of affairs that occur outside of one's awareness.[96] In such cases, we can characterise one's positive orientation toward a state of affairs at a time not as a mental state or as a property of mental states, but as an observable disposition to continue or maintain a state of affairs. For instance, we can say that marathoners straining to the finish line favour the experience if they persevere despite the presence of distressing physical pain, if they become frustrated with race interruptions, and if they resist attempts to impede their progress. This dispositional account of favouring is not adequate in every case. For instance, one might favour the subtle trace of a fragrance but find its persistence cloying. In such cases, it seems more fitting to describe favouring in terms of sensory pleasure.[97] In other cases, it seems more fitting to describe favouring in terms of an attitudinal response to a state of affairs. My partner and I favoured her giving birth, but it would be odd to describe the favouring in sensory or dispositional terms. Neither of us favored the experience for its sensory qualities, nor were we disposed for her labor to continue longer than necessary.

We set out to explore the subjective evaluative states that a pluralistic account of endorsement might include. The diversity is intimidating. We can characterise a subject's orientation toward a state of affairs at different times as a quality of his or her sensory experience, an attitudinal response to a state of affairs, and a disposition to continue or maintain a state of affairs. We must suppress the reductionist impulse and accept the complexity of subjective

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[96] Richard Brandt, *A Theory of the Good and the Right.* Oxford, Clarendon Press 1979, 40 – 41.
[97] Justin Gosling, *Pleasure and Desire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, 65.

evaluative states that subjects experience. The dimension one emphasizes in a given case will depend on the state of affairs under consideration, and the purpose for which one is conducting the analysis. In some cases, endorsement will involve the sensory quality of an experience; in others, an attitudinal response; in still others, a disposition to continue or maintain a state of affairs.[98] In complex cases, two or more subjective evaluative states may come to bear in a single analysis of endorsement.

A natural way to describe endorsement at a time is to reach for a pluralistic account that can accommodate this diversity. Call this view *endorsement as favouring*. We can say that one endorses an object when one favours it *under suitable conditions*; that is, when one is positively oriented towards it in feeling, thought, and action; or when one anticipates it enthusiastically and is disposed to pursue it; or when one is pleased when it obtains and one is disposed to continue the experience or maintain the state of affairs; or when one has pleasant thoughts about it after it obtains.[99] This implies that the favouring need not take place at the same time as you experience a good, which is necessary to deal with cases such as flow states, where the endorsement occurs only in hindsight. This account of endorsement at a time identifies two significant evaluative dimensions: an attribute of subjective

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[98] It is debatable whether the dispositional account of endorsement is distinct from a desire account of well-being. Brandt (1979) seems to imply that the dispositional account of happiness that inspires my own account of endorsement is distinct from desire accounts of well-being. Bykvist (2010) questions whether the distinction between the desire account and the dispositional is a real distinction but does not pursue the issue. I will continue to treat them as distinct.

[99] My formulation of endorsement relies on Donald Davidson's account of pro-attitudes. See "Actions, reasons and causes." In *Essays on Actions and Events.* London: Clarendon Press, 1980, 4.

experience, and an observable tendency to continue an experience or maintain a state of affairs. The first dimension captures endorsements that involve a sensory or attitudinal orientation to a state of affairs; the second dimension captures endorsements that involve a disposition to continue an experience or maintain a state of affairs.[100]

The considered view I defend in the fifth chapter is that we can address the problem of authority, the problem of worth, and the double bind problem by defending an accommodating view of well-being according to which one fares well at a time when one endorses worthy goods. This is a hybrid theory of well-being that joins endorsement as favouring with an account of worth. On my considered view, endorsement is necessary for well-being at a time, and welfare subjects fare better over time when they endorse worthy objects. As we shall see at the end of this chapter, the caveat that endorsement is only necessary for well-being in central cases is necessary to deal the double bind problem. While a full assessment of the descriptive adequacy of my considered view must wait for the fifth chapter, we can appreciate the impact of endorsement as favouring on the generality of the subjective part of the account.

Endorsement as favouring is not a conjunctive account of the subjective part of well-being, though its elements can interact in various ways. Insisting on

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[100] One might wonder whether there is room for desire in a pluralistic account of endorsement. Depending on how broadly one characterises the attitudinal and dispositional dimensions of endorsement, it can be difficult to distinguish between a state of affairs one is *pleased* obtains, a state of affairs one is disposed to continue, and a state of affairs that one is *satisfied* obtains. Moreover, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the dispositional view of pleasure and the attitudinal view. Fred Feldman treats them as separate. See “On the intrinsic value of pleasure.” *Utilitarianism, Hedonism, and Desert*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 125-150.

describing favouring as a single distinctive evaluative state or a necessary conjunction of such states would be misleading. In some cases, the obtaining of a single dimension will be sufficient to warrant the claim that a subject favours a state of affairs; in most cases, several conditions will be jointly sufficient. The upshot is a descriptively adequate account of endorsement that can capture the wide range of evaluative states characteristic of different welfare subjects from the animal to the human, the fetus to the senior.

For instance, human adults who endorse eating strawberry ice cream are likely to be positively oriented toward the activity along a number of dimensions. They will be positively oriented toward eating strawberry ice cream in feeling, thought, and action, they will be disposed to pursue it for a time, and they will have pleasant thoughts about it after the state of affairs obtains. Experiences such as those of straining marathoners may also call for a multi-faceted description, one that includes not only their disposition to continue the race, but also the hedonic quality of their experience, their attitudes about the race, and their expectations about their performance. In other cases, endorsement will consist of a more modest combination of evaluative states, or involve only unconscious evaluative states. The endorsement of a toddler nestled in a warm blanket is no less significant for lacking the sophistication of adults, who are more likely to anticipate, savor, and remember the states of affairs they endorse. Likewise, the endorsement of autotelic agents immersed in flow states is no less significant for its unconscious character.[101] Flow states make important

[101] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes autotelic agents as people who are internally driven and more likely to experience flow states. Csikszentmihalyi (1997): 117.

contributions to well-being despite the fact that we cannot characterise subjects at the time as positively oriented towards them in feeling and thought. Still, they may well anticipate them, be disposed to continue them, and have pleasant thoughts about them after they obtain.

The requirement that favouring occur under suitable conditions concedes that some favourings are susceptible to procedural mistakes. On this account, some kinds of favourings involve a *perception* of a qualitative feature of a state of affairs, such as its sensory profile. Others involve a *judgment* assessing some feature of a state of affairs against criteria of one's devising, such as its attitudinal profile. Following Sumner, we might insist that one's attitudinal responses be informed and autonomous. If more information would change one's grasp of a state of affairs or change one's evaluative criteria, or if there is reason to believe that mechanisms have eroded one's capacity to reflect critically on one's values, standards, and expectations, then one's favouring is suspect. Hence, Tom, the deceived executive who falsely believes his life a success, may not fare well despite the fact that he is positively oriented toward his experiences. The deception may not affect his experience *ex hypothesi*, but it is reasonable to suspect that more information would change his attitudinal response to the conditions of his life.[102] In the possible world where more information would not affect his judgment, then Tom fares well despite the deception.

Notice that perceptions and judgments are not equally susceptible to procedural mistakes. Suppose a toddler favours resting under a warm blanket in

[102] See section 2.3.

the sense that he or she experiences surplus sensory pleasure when the state of affairs obtains. It is difficult to imagine how such favouring could be mistaken. This is an important epistemic difference between the sensory and attitudinal components of endorsement as favouring. Note that the different dimensions of well-being may conflict as well. I may take sensory pleasure in something that later displeases me in an attitudinal sense. In such cases, we must weigh the intensity of one kind of endorsement against the other and determine the intensity of the endorsement overall. It would certainly be simpler to abandon the pluralistic account in favor of another that reduces endorsement to a single dimension. However, the pluralistic account is consistent with how we make welfare judgments in practice. The subjective part of well-being does not reduce to a single dimension. Rather, we reach for the kind of endorsement that is most compelling in a given case. In some cases, as when I am considering the impact of eating strawberry ice cream on my well-being, it will make most sense to draw on the sensory part of endorsement. In other cases, as when I am considering the impact of anticipating a vacation on my well-being, it will make most sense to draw on the attitudinal part of endorsement. In central cases, one kind of endorsement will likely be dominant.

Is endorsement in this sense *necessary* for well-being under suitable conditions? Perhaps the weaker claim that such endorsement matters is not a bad place to start searching for an answer. What reasons do we have to believe that this less controversial claim is true? Our practices surrounding endorsement provide at least some initial reasons for believing that it matters to our well-being.

We capture endorsements in schedules of concerns; we act as if they matter; we believe that they give direction to our actions; and we believe that they constrain the actions of others. In cases where morality requires that we modify our schedules of concerns for the sake of others, we experience the change as a loss, though we may adopt it willingly and we may ultimately benefit from it later. Conversely, the claim that endorsement as such and on its own has no value, that what one cares about lacks intrinsic importance, has unattractive consequences. It implies that projects and relationships for which we care deeply do not matter as such, and that involuntary pleasures, like the comfort we take in a warm blanket, make no intrinsic contributions to our well-being. We may insist with Sumner that endorsement be authentic, i.e. informed, and autonomous, but once we do so, it is difficult to deny its intrinsic importance.

The consequences of denying the intrinsic importance of endorsement are even more unattractive in cases involving negative endorsements. This is the case particularly if one maintains a symmetrical view of the importance of welfare and illfare, that is, if one assumes that faring well and faring poorly are equally important.[103] We can say that one *rejects* an object when one holds it in disfavour under suitable conditions: that is, when one is negatively oriented towards it in feeling, thought, and action; one anticipates it unenthusiastically and is disposed to avoid bringing it into being; one is displeased when it obtains, and one is disposed to discontinue the experience or bring the state of affairs to an end; and

[103] The term “welfare” has no obvious opposite in English, which makes it difficult to express the idea of the importance of states of affairs in which one fares well and others in which one fares poorly. For my purposes, the term “illfare” refers to the latter.

one has unpleasant thoughts about it after it obtains. Denying the intrinsic importance of negative endorsements implies that rejecting a state of affairs also lacks intrinsic importance; that physical injuries, headaches, and mental anguish have no disvalue as such and on their own; and that poor Richard's depression in itself does not bear on his well-being. These claims will strike all but the most ascetic observer as seriously implausible.

Still, the endorsement thesis, the claim that endorsement is necessary for well-being, must turn on something more than broad agreement with the weaker claim that endorsement matters, if only to address suspicions that the judgment is premature, and the endorsement thesis, too ambitious. Even if endorsement matters, it may not matter in every case; that is, it may not be necessary for well-being.

Recognizing the intrinsic importance of endorsement requires that we grasp the relation between well-being and experience. We must preserve what Griffin calls the *experience requirement*.[104] Placing an experience requirement on well-being commits us to the view that the explanation or justification of the welfare value of a state of affairs derives in part from its effect, actual or possible, on human experience and its quality. The modal conditions embedded in this description of experience requirement are necessary to account for cases in which the welfare subject's endorsement is inauthentic. If more information about one's circumstances would make a difference to one's judgment about how well one is faring, or if one's standards are a function of external manipulation, then

[104] Griffin (1986): 13-19.

one does not fare well despite the state of affairs' actual effect on one's experience and its quality. More simply, in most cases, welfare subjects benefit from a given state of affairs only if that state of affairs has an effect on them.

Endorsement as favouring meets the experience requirement in its most general sense. On this view, one cannot be positively oriented towards a state of affairs that does not have an effect on one's mind or experience. The phenomenology of well-being that emerges from endorsement as favouring is familiar. The environment affects welfare subjects; their brain evaluates the relevant states of affairs and generates an orientation to them; those orientations are fairly stable and reliable under suitable conditions; and welfare subjects have access to some orientations and can communicate them to others. In some cases, such as flow states, the evaluation of a state of affairs will be below the threshold of awareness. In others, it will have a merely sensory quality, and lack the complex beliefs and attitudes about its occurrence or its welfare value that attitudinal orientations have. However, in all cases, endorsement as favouring implies that states of affairs that confer harm or benefit on a welfare subject must *affect* the experience of subjects. This claim seems to have controversial implications. For instance, it seemingly implies that the deceived executive who falsely believes his life a success fares well despite the deception. This conclusion is less controversial than it may seem at first glance.

As we have seen, desire theorists argue that preserving the connection between experience and well-being entails that mental states are all that

matter.[105] This commits us to the view that Tom, the deceived executive who falsely believes his life a success, fares well to the extent that he endorses the conditions of his life, since the deception does not affect his experience *ex hypothesi*. As Griffin describes it, “if the delusion is complete, one believes that one has the truth; the mental states involved in believing something that really is true and believing a successful deception are the same.”[106] The intimate relation between well-being and experience implies that Tom fares well ‘on the inside’ despite what his life may seem like to observers ‘from the outside.’ Desire theorists insist that what we do not know *can* harm or benefit us. If Tom wants his children to fare well and unbeknownst to him they do not, Tom does not fare well despite the fact that his mental states are indistinguishable from someone whose children do fare well. Therefore, the experience requirement is false: mental states are not all that matters.

Other writers have suggested ways to lessen the sting of the experience requirement. We can do so in two ways. First, we can insist with Sumner that Tom endorse the state of affairs under suitable conditions. This seems right. If Tom is poorly informed or if his standards are a function of external manipulation, that is, if they are not authentic, then he is not faring well at a time despite his endorsement.[107] The concession does not threaten the intrinsic importance of endorsement to well-being since it merely imposes procedural constraints on welfare value, a constraint that sustains rather that impedes agent sovereignty.

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[105] See section 2.3., page 51. For a discussion of this position, see Parfit (1984), Griffin (1986), Kagan (1992) and Kagan (1994).
[106] Griffin (1986): 13.
[107] Sumner (1996): 172.

Second, we can explain our reluctance to grant that Tom fares well despite the deception. As Feldman points out, when considering Tom's case, it is tempting to project ourselves into the thought-experiment.[108] This too seems right. Perhaps knowing what we know of Tom's life, we would not want to be in his shoes. Of course, the projection violates the conditions of the thought-experiment: we are assuming that the deception will never affect Tom's experience. If we hold the conditions of the thought-experiment constant, the claim that Tom fares well despite the deception is more plausible.

It is unfortunate that the case of Tom anchors discussions of the soundness of the experience requirement. Certainly, we can explain the harm in Tom's case by appealing to the claim that things other than mental states matter to well-being. However, the experience requirement is not a claim about the kinds of objects that have welfare value, but a claim about the kind of relation that must hold between the subject and a state of affairs for that state of affairs to have welfare value. Specifically, the experience requirement establishes that a state of affairs must *affect* a subject in order to confer a harm or benefit. It is perhaps no surprise that the insistence of desire theorists to abandon the experience requirement generates the scope problem.[109] On one view, the reason that I do not benefit from the satisfaction of my desire that a stranger met briefly fare well is that it does not affect my experience. In a limited sense, experience delineates the boundaries of well-being.[110]

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[108] Feldman (2004): 110.
[109] Section 2.3, page 55.
[110] This is discussed in Parfit (1984): 494.

This claim is far less controversial than the claim that only mental states matter, since it is consistent with the claim that things *other* than mental states matter to one's well-being. We have good reason to believe that experience is necessary for well-being at a time. Following Kagan, we can observe that, since Tom's well-being is a state of his person, changes in his well-being must involve changes in his mind or his body. Since the deception does not involve changes in Tom's mind or body, it does not have an impact on his well-being.[111] Kagan thinks that this entails that our experiences alone ground our well-being, but we need not accept this stronger claim, nor do we need to conclude that only actual and occurrent mental states matter to one's well-being.[112] For instance, unconscious mental states (such as flow states) and the very specific counterfactual mental states implied by Sumner's authenticity conditions also matter.

We may be tempted to judge that Tom fares well, but that in light of the deception, he does not fare as well as he might otherwise fare. The temptation to account for the deception does not suggest that Tom's life is bereft of welfare value, or that his endorsement is not necessary for well-being. Rather, it may suggest that we recognize the deception as an important axiological factor in the assessment of his well-being. Experience may delineate the boundaries of Tom's well-being, but the quality of Tom's experience may not be the only factor relevant to his well-being.

[111] Kagan (1994): 317-9.
[112] Kagan rejects this view in a later piece. See "Well-being as enjoy the good." *Philosophical Perspectives* 23 (2009): 253-272.

In effect, it is possible to defend the endorsement thesis without asserting the agent sovereignty thesis. That is, we can hold that endorsement is necessary for well-being without committing to the view that schedules of concern *alone* determine one's well-being. Other axiological factors matter too. We can capture this judgment in two ways.

In the first, one's endorsement counts toward one's well-being, but the state of affairs that comprises one's endorsement alone constitutes a whole of less welfare value than another possible state of affairs that contains one's endorsement and an independently valuable object. In Tom's case, his endorsement counts toward his well-being, but the state of affairs that comprises his endorsement and the deception constitutes a whole of less welfare value than another possible state of affairs in which Tom endorses the conditions of his life and he is not deceived. The first explanation attaches welfare value to the state of affairs as a whole, and adjusts the value to accommodate all the relevant axiological factors.

In the second, one's endorsement counts towards one's well-being, but an independently valuable object increases the welfare value of the endorsement itself. In Tom's case, his endorsement counts towards his well-being, but the deception diminishes the welfare value of the endorsement itself. The second explanation attaches welfare value to one's endorsement, and applies a discount rate to the value of the endorsement to account for other axiological factors.

In either case, endorsement is necessary to one's well-being, but properties of the state of affairs one endorses affect how well one fares as

well.[113] That is, in either case, endorsement is necessary to Tom's well-being, but properties of the state of affairs he endorses affect how well he fares overall. Whichever explanation we choose to capture the judgment, Tom fares well, but not as well as he would fare were he not deceived. Hence, it is possible to defend the endorsement thesis without asserting the agent sovereignty thesis. That is, it is possible to hold that endorsement is necessary for well-being in central cases without holding that one's schedule of concern alone determines one's well-being. We can have endorsement without sovereignty.

Accepting endorsement as favouring does not commit us to the view that schedules of concern alone always determine one's well-being. Other properties of states of affairs may matter to one's well-being. This limitation is necessary to deal with the double bind problem. Subjects may fare well in states of affairs they endorse, but unless the independent value of goods alone counts at least to some extent, it will be impossible to account for some difficult cases. Given the choice of two states of affairs, both of which one fails to endorse, it must be the case that one fares better in the state of affairs in which one relates to independently valuable objects than in the one in which one does not.

We have not yet shown that the endorsement thesis is true; that is, we have not yet shown that endorsement is necessary for well-being in central cases, a claim on which a solution to the problem of authority hinges. What we need to capture the latter is an argument that establishes that, in central cases, endorsed experience is necessary for well-being.

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[113] For a discussion of the two readings of organic unities, see Tom Hurka, "Two Kinds of Organic Unities," *The Journal of Ethics* 2 (1998): 299-320.

3.3 Agent-Relativity

In this section, I argue that endorsed experience is a constitutive part of well-being. Endorsement as favouring is a collection of sensory, attitudinal, and dispositional orientations to states of affairs that affect the welfare subject. We can say that one endorses an object when one favours it *under suitable conditions*; that is, when one is positively oriented towards it in feeling, thought, and action; or when one anticipates it enthusiastically and is disposed to pursue it; or when one is pleased when it obtains and one is disposed to continue the experience or maintain the state of affairs; or when one has pleasant thoughts about it after it obtains. When subjects experience endorsement, they recognize that it is constitutive of states of affairs that contribute to well-being. That is, one cannot knowingly favour an object without recognizing that such experiences in part constitute what it is to fare well.

Endorsement as favouring is an epistemic and not a metaphysical claim. Puppies and toddlers are positively oriented toward a great many states of affairs, though they are unable to reflect philosophically on the welfare value of that orientation. For reflective human adults, however, the evaluation is an integral part of the experience. This is not simply the claim that welfare subjects value well-being because part of what constitutes welfare states is that they endorse them. The latter can only establish that welfare subjects value states of affairs that they endorse; it does not yet establish that these states of affairs are good for them. The necessary connection between endorsement and well-being

derives from the agent-relativity of well-being, the intuitive claim that one's well-being generates reasons for acting. Subjective theories of well-being seem intuitive largely because the endorsement thesis makes clear the relation between one's well-being and the agent-relativity of well-being.

Consider how Parfit deploys the agent-relativity of well-being against the moral sceptic. Parfit asks whether we have good reason to believe that the question of the objectivity of ethics remains open, and notices that most moral sceptics are not sceptics about rationality. If we accept that there are reasons for acting, then it is an open question whether some reasons for acting are moral reasons. Parfit suggests that we already accept that one has an agent-relative reason to promote one's own well-being. "Suppose that, unless I move, I shall be killed by a falling rock, and that what I now most want is to survive. Do I have a reason to move? It is undeniable that I do." The claim that one has such a reason, he asserts, "would have been accepted in all civilizations, at all times. This claim is true." [114] Well-being has agent-relative normativity in the sense that the claim that a state of affairs is good for someone generates a reason for that person to bring it into being. In a word, our personal well-being should matter to us. It is no accident that we often focus on the role that well-being plays in self-interested decisions. The agent-relativity of well-being explains the place we give to well-being in decision-making that involves only our personal interests. It also explains why we take the well-being of others into consideration. The agent-relative normativity of well-being justifies our concern for the well-being of our

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[114] Parfit (1984): 452.

intimates, and the moral consideration we give to the well-being of strangers. A person's well-being should matter to us because it should matter to them (and it usually does).

Recognizing that endorsement is necessary for well-being spells out the agent-relativity of well-being: if ***S*** endorses ***x***, then ***S*** is good for ***x*** and ***S*** has a reason to bring ***x*** into being. Objective theories that include endorsement as one good among others fail to capture this relation. We can see the truth of this claim if we return to the case of Richard.

Richard experiences many goods, but tragically, he fails to endorse them. His work with the Smithsonian is drudgery, an activity in which he takes no enjoyment and from which he takes no satisfaction.[115] What matters to Richard's well-being is not only that he experience the goods in his life but also that he be positively oriented towards them. The constitutive part that endorsement plays in Richard's well-being makes a stronger claim than merely that suffering and regret mar his life, that these features make his life worse for him on the face of it. If Richard's well-being were merely an objective matter, then the positive contributions that other goods make to his life could outweigh these negative consequences. However, the presence of other goods does not outweigh the fact that he does not endorse the conditions of his life, or that his schedule of concerns is frustrated.

If they fail to affirm the endorsement thesis, the best that theories of well-being can do is provide an agent-neutral account of the normativity of well-being.

[115] Section 2.3, page 47.

Since objective accounts do not tie benefits to a particular perspective, the claim that a person would relate to objects of value in a given state of affairs generates a reason for *anyone* to bring it into being. This misrepresents the nature of well-being and its role in practical reasoning. A formal example should help illustrate this idea.

First, assume that the distinction between agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons follows Nagel's distinction between subjective and objective reasons.[116] According to Nagel, reasons are universal; that is, for every token reason, there is a predicate ***R***, which figures in the following universally quantified proposition:

> Every reason is a predicate ***R*** such that for all persons ***p*** and events ***A***, if ***R*** is true of ***A***, then ***p*** has *prima facie* reason to promote ***A***.[117]

Nagel defines a subjective reason as one "whose defining predicate ***R*** contains a free occurrence of the variable ***p**,*" where ***p*** is a member of the set of free agents.[118] All reasons either contain a free-agent variable or they do not. The former reasons are subjective; the latter are objective.

Now, suppose there is a reason for Richard to restore art because doing so would be good for Richard. This suggests a principle of action corresponding to Richard's reason:

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[116] Nagel distinguishes between subjective and objective reasons in *The Possibility of Altruism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970. Parfit later introduces the term agent-relative and agent-neutral in *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984. Nagel adopts this nomenclature in *The View from Nowhere.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. There are other ways to draw the distinction. For alternatives, see P. Pettit, "Universality without Utilitarianism," *Mind*, 72 (1987): 74-82 and Jonathan Dancy, *Moral Reasons*. Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1993.
[117] Nagel (1970): 47.
[118] Nagel (1970): 91.

> For any person ***p*** and any action ***A***, if ***A*** would be good for ***p***, then ***p*** has reason to promote ***A***.

This first principle of action captures the agent-relativity of well-being: it says that if an action contributes to one's well-being, then one has reason to promote the action. Parfit asserts boldly that all civilizations have accepted this principle in all times.

Conversely, suppose that we express Richard's reason to restore art as follows: there is a reason for Richard to restore art because doing so would be good for someone. In the second case, the fact that the person benefitted is Richard is incidental. If restoring art were good for Richard's neighbor, then Richard would have just as much reason to restore art. This suggests a principle of action corresponding to this reason:

> For any person ***p*** and any action ***A***, if ***A*** is good for someone, then ***p*** has reason to promote ***A***.

This second principle of action is agent-neutral: it says that if an action contributes to anyone's well-being, then one has reason to promote the action. The second principle raises two difficulties.

First, the claim that we already accept that one has an agent-neutral reason to promote someone else's well-being is difficult to accept. Suppose that, contra Parfit, someone will be killed by a falling rock, and that what they now most want is to survive. It is far from undeniable that the moral sceptic has a reason to do anything at all. Even if they accept that there are reasons for acting, it is an open question whether there are moral reasons, that is, whether there are

agent-neutral reasons that motivate an action that would prevent the falling rock from killing someone, especially when doing so will put the rescuer's own well-being at risk. The point is not that no moral reasons can be given to motivate a duty of rescue, but only that those reasons are open to doubt in the way that agent-relative reasons to promote one's well-being are not.

The second difficulty is that the agent-neutral principle effaces the relevance of the identity of the agent who stands to benefit from the action one promotes. On the second account, the fact that *Richard* is the agent having a negative experience, and that *Richard* is the agent whose schedule of concerns is frustrated, is not germane to the judgment that one has reason to promote an action addressing his plight, even if one is Richard himself. To paraphrase Parfit, this hardly seems like a claim that all civilizations, at all times, would have accepted. It seems incredible to claim that a welfare judgment that disregards Richard's identity so completely has anything to do with *him* at all. The second, agent-neutral principle risks reducing the welfare subject to a bare person of a Rawlsian kind, an abstraction that is "ready to consider any new convictions and aims, and even to abandon attachments and loyalties, when doing this promises a life with greater overall…well-being, as specified by a public ranking."[119] Whether the life of a bare person is good for that person seems to have nothing to do with the person who actually lives that life or their schedule of concerns.

[119] John Rawls mentions bare persons in the context of an argument against utilitarianism and subjective theories of well-being. See "Social Unity and Primary Goods," in *Utilitarianism and Beyond*. Edited by Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams, 1982, 181.

Instead, it has everything to do with the agent-neutral reasons moving one to action, and the good one can promote from an agent-neutral standpoint.

On the second account of prudential reasons, then, well-being is divorced entirely from the person whose well-being is at issue, reduced to one value among others that one might promote for the sake of increasing the world's total stock of value. One can imagine Richard considering whether to sacrifice his schedule of concern for the sake of the value his work creates without giving a second thought to the fact that the schedule of concerns sacrificed will be his. This misrepresents the nature of well-being and its role in practical reasoning. Without affirming the endorsement thesis, we lack an argument to bring out the agent-relativity of well-being. Once we grant that endorsement plays a constitutive role in the nature of well-being, however, the agent-relative normativity of well-being stems plainly from schedules concerns.

3.4 Objections

One might object to making any value, even welfare value, conditional on endorsement. In *Virtue, Vice and Value*, for instance, Hurka considers the endorsement thesis in the context of a general thesis about the nature of value. According to the conditionality view, suggests Hurka, we can say that an object's intrinsic value is conditional on the love, desire, or pleasure one takes in an object. Like the endorsement thesis, the conditionality view makes the value of an object provisional on one's attitude: "the love of ***x*** is in some cases not an

additional good to ***x*** but a condition on ***x***'s having value."[120] Hurka ascribes the conditionality view to political philosophers who defend an endorsement constraint on perfectionist goods.[121]

The defining feature of the conditionality view is that it denies that perfectionist states such as knowledge and achievement have value in the absence of an appropriate response on the part of the subject. If the subject does not believe that knowledge or achievement are intrinsically good, or if they are not the object of a generic positive attitude on the part of the subject, then perfectionist states are worthless. Hurka argues that this denial is counterintuitive, a point he presses by imagining an artist who creates exceptional works of art, but whose performance hinges on setting exacting standards for her work. Regrettably, her standards take their toll and she gradually becomes dissatisfied until she no longer loves her work either intellectually or emotionally. "It is uncontroversial that her inability to value her work for itself is a loss," suggests Hurka, "but to say it deprives her highly skillful activity of all worth is going too far."[122]

A second related objection to making any value, even welfare value, conditional on endorsement is that one can endorse the conditions of one's life for superficial reasons. The endorsement thesis holds welfare value hostage to the whims of the subject's responses, which can be weak, impulsive, and confused. Richard Arneson makes this case most forcefully. He imagines the

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[120] Thomas Hurka, *Vice, Virtue, Value.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 181.
[121] See Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 216, 277-8.
[122] Hurka (2001): 187-8.

case of a brilliant writer who fails to endorse the quality of her work on the ground of an aesthetic theory she has foolishly embraced.[123] Surely, her achievement is good for her despite the fact that she fails to endorse it intellectually.

Where the first objection insists on the perfectionist value of objects one fails to endorse, the second insists on their welfare value. The trouble is that both objections lead inexorably to the problem of authority. If we deny that endorsement is necessary for well-being, then we risk alienating subjects from their own well-being. We can grant the two objections without jeopardising the endorsement thesis, however. We can do so in two ways.

First, we can restrict the scope of the endorsement thesis explicitly to welfare value. Much like our Richard, the disillusioned artist toils at her art but she does not endorse the conditions of her life. She endorses neither the process nor the product, yet she creates striking works of art that add to the world's store of objective goods. One can hold that the art she produces has great value, as Hurka does, yet deny that it has welfare value. That is, we can hold that the state of affairs is good simpliciter without holding that it is good for her. The art she produce may have a great deal of value in a perfectionist sense, but she does not fare much better from her standpoint for all that. Hurka can resist the restricted application of the conditionality view to welfare, but only at the cost of identifying welfare value with perfectionist value.[124] Unfortunately, this response

[123] Richard Arneson, "Human Flourishing versus Desire Satisfaction," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16 (Winter 1999): 35-8.
[124] It is worth noting that Hurka proposes perfectionism as an alternative to welfare value. See *Perfectionism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 15.

not only generates the problem of authority, alienating the welfare subject from her well-being, but it also reduces welfare value to a rival dimension of value.[125]

Second, we can question whether the artist's endorsement occurs under suitable conditions. If more information about the independent value of her work would change her evaluative criteria or her grasp of the state of affairs under evaluation, then her endorsement is suspect. We can draw a similar conclusion if there is reason to believe that the life of the struggling artist has eroded her capacity to reflect critically on her values, standards, and expectations. One can hold that the actual endorsements of welfare subjects are sometimes weak, impulsive and confused, as Arneson holds, yet insist that endorsements under suitable conditions are necessary for well-being. Again, to insist otherwise invites the kind of alienation from her well-being that generates the problem of authority.

Arneson is willing to take the objection further. Imagine that the struggling artist attains all the goods listed on the most promising objective theory of well-being but that by some quirk of her psychology, she fails to respond positively to them. For good measure, we can imagine that she responds to this axiological bounty under suitable conditions. Given that she has every good but the good of endorsement, it seems incredible to claim that this single character trait reduces her well-being to nothing.[126] Surely, the independent value of the state of affairs she fails to endorse contributes to her well-being at least to some extent. This more ambitious objection resonates with the objectivist's concern with informed

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[125] Section 2.3, 66.
[126] Richard Arneson, "Human Flourishing versus Desire Satisfaction," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16 (Winter 1999): 37.

desire accounts.[127] It is difficult to imagine recommending the life of the grass-counter to others because of a nagging sense that the grass-counter does not fare as well as he could fare. These three objections suggest that the agent sovereignty thesis is false: our concerns are not all that matters to our well-being. In some cases, the worth of the object of those concerns also matters.

In effect, Arneson's objection raises the double bind problem under a slightly different guise. Moore's method of isolation can guide our intuitions in this case.[128] Consider two nearly identical states of affairs, each of which the disillusioned artist equally fails to endorse. The only relevant difference between the two worlds is that one contains objective goods and the other does not. Which state of affairs does she have most reason to pursue for her own sake, and which one do others have most reason to promote for the sake of another? The intuition that objective goods matter at least to some extent seems correct. It seems unreasonable to claim that objective goods by themselves fail to count towards the disillusioned artist's well-being. One might be tempted to reply that the disillusioned artist should be indifferent between the two worlds insofar as her welfare is concerned, but it is difficult to accept this response from the third person standpoint of someone who cares for her. When I think about which state of affairs I would promote for my own child, each of which he fails to endorse, I estimate that I would have most reason to promote for his own sake the state of affairs that contained objective goods over another that contained none.

[127] Section 2.3, 56.
[128] G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*. Oxford University Press, 2003, 142, 145-7, 236, 256.

Arneson concludes that endorsement is not necessary for well-being, which invites the kind of alienation that generates the problem of authority. This will not do. As I argued in section 3.3, agent-relativity is an essential feature of welfare value. If there really is no endorsement, then there is no welfare value. This does not imply that the lives under examination are *worthless*. In the case of the disillusioned artist, as in the case of Richard, there are plenty of other kinds of goods present. Our disillusioned artist is involved in the creation of beauty, and her activity displays excellence appropriate to the kind of activity in which she engages. Moreover, it is plausible to suppose that the art she creates is useful to others, and that the activity in which she engages has a kind of moral value. The presence of these other kinds of value might explain our hesitation when faced with a Moorean choice. If I had to choose between two equally unendorsed states of affairs on behalf of someone for whom I cared, I might promote a valuable state of affairs over a worthless one. I could take comfort in knowing that they would at least lead valuable lives, even if they failed to endorse them. However, an unendorsed state of affairs has no welfare value. This analysis explains our reaction to the double bind problem without claiming that goods have value by themselves. It implies that, given two states of affairs, each of which one equally fails to endorse, it makes sense to promote the state of affairs that contains independently valuable goods than over another that does not.

What are we to do with the grass-counter? It is difficult to imagine recommending the life of the grass-counter to others because of a nagging sense that the grass-counter does not fare as well as he could fare. Our concerns are

not all that matters to our well-being. In some cases, the worth of the object of those concerns also matters. We can explain our reaction to the case of the grass-counter if we accept that a discontinuity in welfare value between what I call “low fare” and “full fare.” A discontinuity in value is a sharp break between the welfare contributions of different kinds of welfare goods such that no amount of one good can ever be more valuable than some finite amount of another good. In the central case, faring well involves both endorsement and goods. Call the great contribution that endorsement and worth make together “full fare.” It is also true that endorsement on its own counts toward well-being, though it counts for less than the unity. Call the small contribution that endorsement makes on its own “low fare.” This discontinuity is necessary to deal with the double bind problem without abandoning the endorsement thesis. On this view, the grass-counter fares well since we are supposing that he endorses his worthless activity, but he experiences a relatively low amount of welfare. The discontinuity in welfare value not only explains why the disillusioned artist fares much better in any state of affairs she does endorse; it also explains why it is difficult to imagine recommending the life of the grass-counter to others. However well he fares, he would fare much better if he endorsed a more worthy state of affairs.

Hence, in standard cases, endorsement is necessary for well-being. In cases when endorsement is not in the offing, one has most reason to choose for oneself or for someone for whom one cares the state of affairs with independent value, though an endorsed state of affairs would still be for the best.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that addressing the problem of authority requires that we recognize that endorsement is necessary for well-being in central cases. A descriptively adequate theory of well-being should incorporate the endorsement thesis: that is, it should grant that, in most cases and under suitable conditions, the possession of some good contributes to one's well-being only if one endorses it. However, it should also grant that objective goods on their own make at least some welfare contributions.

I formulated a pluralistic model of endorsement according to which one endorses an object when one *favours* it. The favouring relation situates the subject's *orientation* toward a state of affairs along an evaluative dimension. We can say that one endorses an object when one favours it under suitable conditions; that is, when one is positively oriented towards it in feeling, thought, and action; one anticipates it enthusiastically and is disposed to pursue it; one is pleased when it obtains and one is disposed to continue the experience or maintain the state of affairs; and one has pleasant thoughts about it after it obtains. I committed to a number of claims.

First, this account of endorsement at a time identifies two relevant evaluative dimensions, but it is not a conjunctive account of the subjective part of well-being. Insisting on describing favouring as a single distinctive evaluative state or a necessary conjunction of such states would be misleading. In some cases, the obtaining of a single dimension will be sufficient to warrant the claim

that a subject favours a state of affairs; in most cases, several conditions will be jointly sufficient.

Second, the experience requirement, properly understood, commits us to the view that the welfare value of a state of affairs derives in part from its effect, actual or possible, on human experience and its quality.

Third, the requirement that favouring occur under suitable conditions concedes that some favourings are susceptible to procedural mistakes. The upshot is a descriptively adequate account of endorsement that can capture the wide range of evaluative states characteristic of different welfare subjects from the animal to the human, the fetus to the senior. A full discussion of the descriptive adequacy of my considered view must wait for the fifth chapter, where I defend a hybrid view of well-being according to which one fares well at a time when one endorses goods worthy of concern.

Finally, I argued that what best explains the agreement that endorsement matters to well-being is that experiences of endorsement are constituted in part by a distinctive evaluative attitude that captures the intrinsic importance of such experiences to one's well-being. This evaluative attitude is consistent with the agent-relativity of welfare claims.

I then considered three objections to making welfare value depend on the subject's endorsement. The first two objections resist making value conditional on endorsement or weak endorsement. I argued that we can grant both objections by restricting the scope of the endorsement thesis and insisting that

endorsement occur under suitable conditions. The third objection is a restatement of the double bind problem. I argued that endorsement is necessary for welfare in central cases, and that objectively good states of affairs one does not endorse do not contribute to one's welfare. The trouble with our intuitions surrounding tortured artists objections is that it is difficult to tell whether they capture welfare value or a rival dimension of value. I argued that it still made sense to hope that the grass-counter would opt to endorse worthy goods. I suggested that this commits us to a discontinuity in welfare value between low fare and full fare.

Chapter 4: Well-Being and Worth

"It is surely a strange reversal of the natural order of thought to say that our admiring an action either is, or is what necessitates its being good. We think of its goodness as what we admire in it, and as something it would have even if no one admired it, something it has in itself."

~ W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*

4.1 Introduction

We now turn to the problem of worth. The greatest obstacle for subjectivists is their reluctance to introduce an independent value requirement that bears on one's well-being. Critics of subjective theories object that not all the objects in one's schedule of concerns are on equal axiological footing. Some objects have more worth than other objects. In fact, some objects are so worthless that they seem not to have any welfare value at all, whatever one's schedule of concerns. It is difficult to imagine recommending the life of the grass-counter to others because of a nagging feeling that the grass-counter is pursuing a worthless object. To deal with the problem of worth, we need an account that explains the sense in which the objects of one's concerns have value independently of the fact that they engage one's active interest, attention, and care. The account must address the problem of worth without sacrificing fidelity to generality, and it must accommodate the intuition that endorsement counts toward well-being to some extent even in the absence of objective goods.

In chapter four, I argue that we can explain the sense in which objects are independently valuable without rejecting the endorsement thesis, but it requires

that we abandon the agent sovereignty thesis. That is, in most cases and under suitable conditions, endorsement is necessary for well-being, but one's schedule of concerns alone does not determine one's well-being. Other things matter. In most cases, welfare subjects fare well over time when they endorse objects of greater worth. An object has independent value if its value is not entirely determined by one's actual schedule of concern. One object has greater worth than another object if it has greater independent value than that object. I argue that these claims are consistent with the previous chapter's conclusions. Under suitable conditions, endorsement remains necessary for well-being in central cases, worthy goods on their own contribute to well-being at least to some extent, and one fares better in states of affairs one endorses than in states of affairs one does not endorse.

I make this case in the following way. In section 4.2, I argue that we should abandon the agent sovereignty thesis. I analyse the welfare judgments that we make from the first-person and the third-person standpoint. I argue that some welfare judgments presuppose that some objects are more worthy of concern than other objects, and that we have good reason to accept this characterisation of welfare judgments. Endorsement figures prominently in welfare judgments, but so do questions concerning the worth of the objects one endorses.

In section 4.3, I argue that we can explain the sense in which certain objects are more worthy of concern than other objects without denying the endorsement thesis I defend in chapter three. The skillful pursuit of welfare is an

expertise that one acquires and develops over time. The endorsements that subjects make under suitable conditions situate them as epistemic authorities in a community of knowers who share an interest in faring well. On this view, judgments of worth are intersubjective ideals that play a crucial role in developing expertise in the pursuit of welfare and enabling the practice of welfare value. By the practice of welfare, I mean the norms, activities, and institutions that guide human behaviour in determining what well-being consists in and how best to achieve it. Specifically, judgments of worth guide welfare subjects toward authentic standards and reliable sources of well-being. My view is not that appeal to the community assists us in determining the means to well-being. Rather appeal to the community assists us in determining the nature of welfare. Communal norms determine in part what welfare consists in. Faring well over time consists in endorsing objects worthy in this sense.

In section 4.4, I consider objections to this characterization of worth. First, I suggest that judgments of worth do not figure to the same extent in all welfare judgments. The extent to which a particular welfare judgment emphasizes the worth of the objects in a given schedule of concerns reflects in part the authority of the welfare subject, which is a function of their expertise in the pursuit of welfare. This conclusion is consistent with an intuition I discuss in section 4.2, namely, that judgments of worth arise naturally when one considers what it makes sense to want for a child for whom one cares. I then argue that judgments concerning the worth of an object must be defeasible. Some communal ideals represent the wisdom of the age, others, its prejudice. The soundness of a

judgment of worth is conditional on the most reliable empirical evidence concerning the standards and objects that are likely to constitute the well-being of welfare subjects over time. I grant that the resulting account of worth remains tied to schedules of concerns at least in an intersubjective sense, but I suggest that this is an asset rather than a liability of the account.

4.2 Worth

In this section, I analyse the welfare judgments that we make from the first-person and the third-person standpoint, and I argue that we should reject the agent sovereignty thesis. One's schedule of concerns alone does not determine one's well-being. Other things matter.

We make welfare judgments from a first-person and a third-person standpoint.[129] From a first-person standpoint, welfare judgments are the foundation for rational decisions in which only one's interests are concerned. One has reason to be concerned with what makes one's life go well for one's own sake: if a state of affairs is good for me, then I have a *prima facie* reason to want that state of affairs to obtain.[130] First-person welfare judgments are the intuitive heartland of subjective accounts of well-being, the logical space in which one's evaluative perspective has pride of place. Surely, the argument goes, one's own schedule of concern is the most relevant consideration when determining what is

[129] See "Value, Desire and the Quality of Life." *The Quality of Life*. Edited by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. 185-200. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1993; "The Status of Well-Being." *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 1996: 93-143; *What We Owe Each Other.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997: chapter 2.
[130] On the agent-relativity of welfare judgments, see Section 3.3.

in one's best interest, or what one has most reason to do for one's own sake.[131] Provided one forms one's schedule of concerns under suitable conditions, no other reference group is more authoritative to establish whether one fares well. When we frame the subjectivity of well-being as a matter of self-ownership in this way, an independent value requirement readily becomes a paternalistic infringement on one's individual sovereignty.[132]

The plausibility of this subjective account of first-person welfare judgments relies in part on unassuming examples that analogize reasons to matters of taste. For example, if one favours ice cream and one prefers strawberry to rocky road, one will fare better to the extent that others respect one's favouring of strawberry ice cream and the state of affairs one prefers obtains. On this view, one's endorsements provide agent-relative reasons to pursue a given state of affairs. Provided one forms one's endorsement of strawberry ice cream under suitable conditions, no other consideration is relevant to one's judgment, no other reason more authoritative than the mere fact that one endorses it. In such cases, it makes sense to conclude that one's endorsement is the sole consideration relevant to whether one fares well at a time, and that endorsement by itself contributes to one's well-being. After all, there are no arbiters of taste.

One can make a case for the claim that the taste model satisfies the generality criterion for descriptive adequacy. The model seems to capture the full range of welfare judgments we make, and to fit all core welfare subjects. It tells us what it is for a person to fare well or poorly at a time and over a period, and for

[131] Sumner (1996): 42 – 44. See also Scanlon (1997): 124, 387.
[132] For instance, Sumner (1996): 163 – 166.

a person to gain or lose over time. It captures what it is for sentient entities to fare well, from the animal to the human, the fetus to the senior. However, we must be careful lest we purchase generality at the expense of fidelity. If the taste model cannot explain our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being, then we have reason to revise it. As it stands, the taste model gives a lucid account of welfare judgments involving simple cases. However, there is reason to believe that it fails to explain cases that are more complex.

Many reasons motivate the endorsements we make, only some of which are analogous to taste. Barring trivial choices of the kinds of ice cream one favours, mere endorsement is seldom the sole reason motivating our pursuits. Suppose there are states of affairs that Derek wants to experience, goals that he wants to achieve, and relationships that he wants to nurture. He wants to enjoy espresso on the Canal Grande, he wants to save Venice from the hungry Mediterranean, he wants others to remember him as the Saviour of Venice, and he wants to be a successful parent. Beyond these projects, Derek also wants to be a certain kind of person. He wants to be a diligent colleague, a considerate friend, and a caring partner. These goods form a more or less unified schedule of concerns, a loose program that specifies the objects that engage his active interest, attention, and care.[133] He may have developed some goods in detail, reflected carefully on his motivation for pursuing them, and given loose priority to them in a way that provides a general structure in which to situate other goods. He need not have organized this loose program very carefully, however. To

[133] I first specify what a schedule of concerns consists in in section 2.1, page 27.

constitute a schedule of concerns, it is sufficient that these objects engage his interest, attention, and care.

Now, we may reduce the reason for Derek's desire to enjoy espresso on the Canal Grande to mere endorsement without misrepresenting its justification. If one were to ask him why he wanted to enjoy espresso on the popular Venetian thoroughfare, he might credibly respond *because I want to do it* or *because I enjoy it*. If one were to press him further, he might describe the experience in detail, the flavor of espresso, the Venetian vista, the history of the Canal, but his justification could stand on his endorsement alone. Like my simple endorsement of strawberry ice cream, Derek's desire to enjoy espresso on the Canal may be simply a matter of taste. Moreover, under this description, it makes sense to conclude that Derek's endorsement is the sole consideration relevant to whether he benefits from enjoying his espresso. It is enough that he favours it, that he is positively oriented towards it in thought, feeling, and action, that he is motivated to pursue it, that he is pleased when it obtains, and that he has pleasant thoughts about it once it obtains. If he formed his endorsement under suitable conditions, then it is sufficient for his well-being.

As one moves to the more complex goods on his schedule of concerns, the claim that endorsement is the sole justification for his pursuit becomes less credible. His decision to pursue an important project certainly reveals a preference for its completion, but endorsement may not be the exclusive or even

the most important reason for his pursuit.[134] The justification of Derek's desire to restore Venice hinges not only on his endorsement but also on his judgment that the end itself is worth endorsing. The precise nature of the judgment Derek makes certainly needs an explanation. However, our direct experiences of well-being seem to warrant the claim that worth plays a role in justifying his interests in the goods he pursues. One wants to complete a difficult project, to be a successful parent, a diligent colleague, a considerate friend, and a caring partner because one believes that these states of affairs matter for reasons other than the mere fact that one wants them to obtain. Mere endorsement does not exhaust the justification of our pursuit of these goods. One endorses them because one believes they are worthy of endorsement.

The attitudes one takes in practice toward practical reasoning are evidence that such considerations are pervasive in welfare judgments. It would not be at all strange for Derek to confess that he had reflected carefully about the worth of his goals before leaving for Venice, revising some, rejecting others, and adopting new ones. All the while, Derek acted as if there was actually something to discover beyond what he wanted, some fact about the worth of restoration work or parenthood that might weigh in their favour against other considerations. Even in cases in which only his interests are concerned, he worried about which state of affairs he had most reason to pursue, whether he was in fact making the right decisions, and whether his endorsement would ultimately be for the best.

[134] Let there be two bundles of goods **a** and **b,** and a fully-informed and self-interested agent **S.** If **S** chooses **a** over **b**, we say that S has a revealed preference for **a** over **b**. See P. Samuelson. "A Note on the Pure Theory of Consumers' Behaviour," *Economica* 5 (1938):61-71.

Moreover, while we are imagining a case in which Derek's endorsement ultimately tracked the worth of his goals, such convergence was hardly a forgone conclusion. We can imagine a slightly different case in which Derek concluded that restoring Venice and becoming a successful parent were indeed worthy and achievable goals he endorsed, but he found that he had difficulty mustering the energy to act on his endorsement. Part of the knotty problem Aristotle calls *akrasia* or weakness of will stems from not pursuing states of affairs one endorses as worthy of concern.[135] In this case, Derek might settle for a less worthy goal against his better judgment and regret that he would not fare as well overall, or he might decide to cultivate his determination to pursue his goals despite his ambivalence. One might explain away the akratic conflict as a clash between Derek's current tastes and his considered tastes. Yet appealing to what Derek deems worthy of concern captures the intuition that the relevant standard is not entirely up to him. Under the second description, the akratic Derek believes restoring Venice and becoming a successful parent and partner are worthy ends, even if he fails to pursue them.

If my argument for the persistence of worth in first-person welfare judgments is correct, then the agent sovereignty thesis is false. One's schedule of concerns alone does not determine one's well-being.

[135] The akratic has the correct decision but acts on misdirected appetites instead. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle compares the weak of will to a poorly governed city, one "that votes for all the right decrees and has good laws, but does not apply them, as in Anaxandrides' taunt, 'The city willed it, that cares nothing for laws' " (1152a20-24).

My argument is most directly indebted to Adams' discussion of well-being as enjoying the excellent.[136] Adams proposes a hybrid theory of well-being according to which one's well-being depends on the excellence of the states of affairs one enjoys. He suggests that the fact that we could not enjoy the goods we do if we thought that valuing them was mistaken commits us to the claim that our valuation to some extent captures the worth of the object we enjoy. He writes:

> It is important to our good to enjoy things that we think are in some degree excellent, so if we think we would not be fortunate to be deluded in such matters, we should think it important to our good to enjoy things that really are in some degree excellent.[137]

For Adams, one's attitude to the objects one values and enjoys is evidence that one's valuation extends to the importance or significance of the objects one enjoys.

It is worth noting that the resulting account of well-being need not have anti-hedonistic implications. For instance, if we grant (reasonably, I think) that enjoyment itself is in some degree worthy of concern, enjoying seemingly neutral or worthless objects will contribute to one's well-being. I might think that comic books are nearly worthless objects of concern yet fare well to the extent that I enjoy them with relish. Denying the welfare value of the enjoyment of so-called worthless objects implies that the subjective part of well-being on its own does

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[136] See also Thomas Scanlon, "Value, Desire and Quality of Life," in The Quality of Life, edited by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 185-200, 1993.
[137] Robert Adams. *Finite and Infinite Goods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999: 98.

not contribute to one's well-being, which is counter-intuitive. I first discuss this double bind problem with regard to subjective theories in section 2.3. Subjects may fare well when independently valuable goods figure on their schedule of concerns, but why not think endorsements alone count at least to some extent toward their well-being? Given the choice of two states of affairs in which one fails to concern oneself with a valuable object, it must be the case that one fares better in the state of affairs one endorses than the one that one does not.

The view I discuss in the previous paragraph is not Adam's view, which is enmeshed in a view of enjoyment that presupposes "a life somewhat structured by purposes and valuings."[138] For Adams, enjoying the excellent seems to occur in the context of a rational plan of life. Such views lend themselves best to the assessment of well-being over a complete life. In contrast, well-being as endorsing worthy goods, the considered view I defend in chapter five, is an account of faring well at a time and over a period.

In sum, the justification of Adams' account of well-being as enjoying the good parallels those cited in the case of Tom. If Tom would not be fortunate to find out that he was radically deceived about the conditions of his life, then other things matter than mental states. Adams' position takes the argument further, however: on his view, Tom can also be mistaken about the worth of the objects that he pursues. Faring well is not only a matter of endorsement; one's endorsements must also align with worthy objects or states of affairs.

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[138] Idem.

Other writers have made similar connections between the axiological assumptions we make in practice and the nature of value. In *Meaning in Life and Why it Matters*, Wolf argues that meaningfulness is an essential evaluative standard for human beings. “Meaning in life arises,” she writes, “when subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness, and one is able to do something about it.”[139] Her approach to meaningfulness, which she identifies as a dimension of value distinct from well-being as I define it here, takes seriously the importance that human beings place in living meaningful lives. Like Adams, she asks which conditions must be satisfied to vindicate this kind of human striving, and finds that it is important that we think the things we find appealing are objectively attractive in some sense. Adams and Wolf share an appetite for transcendental arguments. They resist purely subjective readings of value by asking what conditions must be in place for widely held assumptions about human lives to be true. By their lights, excellence and attractiveness underwrite judgments concerning enjoyment and meaningfulness respectively, at least in the case of individuals capable of such judgements. One can argue that a yet unspecified notion of worth underwrites welfare judgments in the same way.

We might be tempted to argue that dispensing with the notion of worth is necessary to simplify the measurement and interpersonal comparison of well-being. We must proceed carefully, however. While one cannot pursue an account of the nature of well-being in isolation from concerns about its measurement and interpersonal comparison, dispensing with worth for the sake of these practical

[139] Susan Wolf. *Meaning in Life.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010: xii.

matters risks misrepresenting the nature of well-being. Models of well-being that eschew judgments of worth are not mere proxies that we construct for the sake of convenience but rival accounts of what faring well consists in.

Specifically, abandoning worth for the sake of convenience risks idealizing the concept of well-being in a way that permanently removes the possibility that the properties of the object of one's concerns constitute part of what faring well consists in, and no set of assumptions will once again restore a full description of the concept's intension.[140] Not all idealizations are permanent in this way. If I want to predict the speed at which a mass will slide down an inclined plane, I may choose to work from an ideal case that discounts friction for the sake of convenience. This common idealization is reversible, however. I can later add a coefficient of friction to the model without compromising its integrity. This is not the case with purely subjective accounts of well-being. Once we preclude worth from welfare judgments, we permanently limit the information to which one can appeal in considering the nature of well-being to formal, procedural considerations, and abandon the assessment of the worth of the objects of our concerns. All ends are equally worthy, none intrinsically better than another end. If subjectivists are to reconcile judgments of worth with the claim that Derek's endorsements are necessary for his well-being, they must find a way to capture worth in subjective terms without misrepresenting the nature of well-being.

[140] On degenerate idealizations in science, see Robert Batterman. *The Devil in the Details: Asymptotic Reasoning in Explanation, Reduction, and Emergence.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

The claim that considerations of worth are prevalent in welfare judgments becomes even more credible when we shift from a first-person to a third-person standpoint. Third-person welfare judgments capture what one has most reason to promote for the sake of another as a benefactor or as an agent. When one reflects on which gift to select for a friend, or on what it makes sense to want for the sake of a child, one has reason to be concerned with what will benefit the interested party for their own sake. The common view is that the first-person standpoint has pride of place in discussions of well-being: well-being matters to benefactors and agents because of its importance to the welfare subject.[141] Not everyone is willing to give first-person judgments priority, however. Some writers have thought that the third-person standpoint is more representative of well-being than the standpoint of a person striving to promote their own well-being.

Adams' writings are a case in point. "The question, what would be best for a given person," he writes, "is less characteristic of that person's own point of view…than of the point of view of someone who loves [them]."[142] Likewise, in *Welfare and Rational Care*, Darwall suggests that "a person's good is constituted, not by what that person values, prefers or wants (or should value), but by what one (perhaps she) should want insofar as one cares about her."[143] Darwall takes his view to be a metaethical account of the concept of welfare, but he suggests that it goes hand in hand with the so-called Aristotelian thesis, a substantive account of well-being according to which what is best for someone is

[141] In section 3.3, I suggest that the priority of first-person welfare judgments is grounded on the agent-relativity of welfare claims.
[142] Robert Adams. *Finite and Infinite Goods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999: 93.
[143] Stephen Darwall. *Welfare and Rational Care*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002: 4.

a life of “significant engagement in activities through which one comes into appreciative rapport with agent-neutral values.”[144] Such “valuing activity” is sensitive to the independent value of the objects of one’s concerns.[145] It is noteworthy that both Adams and Darwall hold that the attitudes and practices surrounding first-person judgments are less typical of the nature of well-being than those surrounding appropriate third-person judgments.

The shift away from the first-person standpoint broadens the set of considerations relevant to well-being in a way that reflects the welfare judgments we actually make. When one considers what it makes sense to want for someone for whom one cares, especially in the case of a child, questions concerning the worth of the objects one has most reason to choose enter quite naturally into one’s considerations. “Few parents would desire for their children a lifetime of narcotic highs, or a life of devotion to wealth or power or fame,” writes Adams, “no matter how much they would be enjoyed.”[146] Even if the lover or caregiver is the person whose well-being is in question, they are less likely to limit the considerations relevant to welfare judgments to mere endorsement when reasoning from the third person standpoint. The properties of the states of affairs one endorses matter.

The broadening of the set of considerations relevant to well-being does not preclude the possibility that, in many cases, one will want the person one cares about to get what they most desire, or what they most enjoy. It will depend

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[144] Darwall (2002): 7, 75.
[145] Idem, 80.
[146] Adams (1999): 97.

on the object of the enjoyment or desire. Nor does it imply that the relation between the nature of well-being and the judgments we make from the third person standpoint is one of straightforward identity. As Feldman suggests, there is plenty of room for healthy skepticism concerning whether the third-person standpoint is *entirely* definitive of well-being. Writes Feldman,

> Suppose a religious fanatic looks into his child's crib… suppose he thinks the best imaginable life for the child is one in which the child becomes a martyr for God... [I]t is not clear that he is expressing a hope about what we would normally think of as the child's well-being.[147]

This seems right. Still, I hope to show in what follows that, in contrast to first-person welfare judgments, the claim that welfare judgments should aim *solely* to respect the welfare subject's schedule of concerns is less plausible in the welfare judgments we make from the third-person standpoint.

When reflecting on what is in the best interest of their beneficiary or principal, it is legitimate in all but the most trivial cases for a benefactor or an agent to consider the worth of the object of one's concerns. Of course, when one considers what is best for someone else, one must take into account his or her settled standards and dispositions, and their considered expectations. One may select a gift for family and friends with an eye to please them or satisfy their preferences. Likewise, one may have separate ethical or legal reasons to respect the preferences of healthy, autonomous adults, or the preferences of those on whose behalf one is acting as an agent. In most cases, beneficiaries and

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[147] Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 10.

principals will retain a large measure of ownership over their well-being. Yet one is not always bound to take another's concerns as definitive of their well-being. Only rarely is choosing what is best for another simply a matter of determining what they prefer.

It is worth noting that purely subjective theories of well-being can accommodate this claim. For instance, when acting on another's behalf, one might choose to disregard uninformed or heteronomous preferences, or disregard an intense but short-lived preference in favour of a slightly weaker but long-standing preference. The outcome of the subjectivist's analysis will depend on the factors at a play in the given case. Still, when advising someone on what they have most reason to do for their own sake, or when choosing on behalf of someone for whom one cares, one expects to share and sometimes act on one's judgment about what is good for them. Beyond simple cases, one is often justified in appealing to worth in one's considerations.

The prevalence of worth in welfare judgments is most stark in third-person judgments involving the well-being of children. Unlike adult beneficiaries, children have few settled dispositions, and the choices of caregivers have a large part to play in settling their future character. This process of education is necessary and appropriate, for the dispositions they would have in the absence of such influence would hardly constitute anything that one could equate with their well-being. Even sensory hedonists will want to shape the dispositions of the children in their care to impart to them the capacity to defer gratification, and desires theorists, the capacity to correct mistaken desires. The caregiver's tastes may

play some role in generating a set of options from which to choose, as will the emerging tastes of the child. However, the criterion guiding one's judgments in choosing among options in this context cannot be merely a matter of taste. Writes Adams:

> In thinking about what would be good for a child, we must think about what interests and habits of choice to encourage and foster in her, and cannot presuppose a system of preference and volitional tendencies already in her as defining the good that we intend for her.[148]

The point is that, barring simple cases, endorsement is unlikely to be the sole reason for the goods one pursues for the sake of someone else. One has reason to be concerned with what will benefit the person for whom one cares at a moment and over a period. What matters is not that one gets what one wants, or that the child does, but that the child fare well. One might have ethical reasons to avoid choices that would compromise the child's capacity to choose for him or herself in the future, but to the extent that one chooses on their behalf, one cannot avoid judgments of worth.[149] This does not rule out the possibility that experiencing surplus pleasure and satisfying desires formed under suitable conditions will constitute an important part of a child's well-being. Endorsement still matters. Enjoyment too can be worthy of concern.

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[148] Adams (1999): 97.

[149] On the child's right to an open-future, see Joel Feinberg See Joel Feinberg, "The Child's Right to an Open Future," in *Freedom and Fulfillment*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992: 76; see also, Claudia Mills, "The Child's Right to an Open Future," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 34(2003): 499-509.

And so the case for worth largely rests on the fidelity criterion for descriptive adequacy. Accounts of well-being that take into consideration the worth of the objects of one's concerns cohere better with some of our pre-analytic beliefs about well-being. The taste model gives a lucid account of welfare judgments involving simple cases; however, it fails to explain the welfare judgments we make in cases that are more complex. Some of these judgments presuppose that some objects are more worthy of concern than other objects. If this argument correct, then the agent sovereignty thesis is false: one's schedule of concerns alone does not determine one's well-being. Still, the conclusion of the argument is consistent with the claim that the endorsement thesis is true. Endorsement remains necessary for well-being at a time in central cases, and well-being remains agent-relative. I have shown in chapter three that it is possible to defend the endorsement thesis without asserting the agent sovereignty thesis. That is, we can hold that endorsement is necessary for well-being in central cases without committing to the view that schedules of concern alone determine one's well-being. Other axiological factors matter too.[150]

Finally, admitting that schedules of concerns alone do not determine well-being violates strong neutrality, but this is not a mark against the account. As agent sovereignty goes, so goes strong neutrality. Here is how the argument works. In chapter one, I suggested that strong neutrality disqualifies accounts of well-being that violate the welfare subject's evaluative perspective.[151]

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[150] See section 3.2, 87.
[151] See section 1.3, 18 – 21.

On this view, descriptively adequate theories of well-being should be entirely indifferent to the choices of welfare subjects, since the evaluation of welfare goods squarely rests on a welfare subject's concerns. For better or worse, well-being is a function of choice. I argued then that strong neutrality is an overly demanding criterion for descriptive adequacy. Some welfare judgments seem consistent with the claim that the nature of well-being is not entirely up to the welfare subject. We cannot rule against these accounts of well-being before we set out on our inquiry, especially since we do not yet have reason to believe that the concerns of welfare subjects alone determine the nature of well-being. In this section, I argued that addressing the problem of the worth requires that we abandon the agent sovereignty thesis. Since we have good reason to believe that the evaluation of an object does not squarely rest on schedules of concerns, we cannot expect descriptively adequate accounts of well-being to be completely indifferent to the choices of welfare subjects. This gives us another reason to abandon strong neutrality as a criterion for descriptive adequacy.

4.3 Expertise

In this section, I argue that we can explain the sense in which certain objects are more worthy of concern than other objects without denying the endorsement thesis. The skillful pursuit of welfare is an expertise that one acquires and develops over time. The endorsements that subjects make under suitable conditions situate them as epistemic authorities in a community of knowers who share an interest in faring well. On this view, judgments of worth

are not objective. They are intersubjective ideals that play a crucial role in developing expertise in the pursuit of welfare and enabling the practice of welfare value. Specifically, judgments of worth guide welfare subjects toward authentic standards and reliable sources of well-being. Faring well over time consists in endorsing objects worthy in this sense.

The story of well-being tends to describe the practice of welfare in largely individualistic terms that abstract from the accidental features of welfare subjects and their context. By the practice of welfare, I mean the norms, activities, and institutions that guide human behaviour in determining what well-being consists in and how best to achieve it.[152] I argued that one model, which likens the practice of welfare to taste, is overly simplistic.[153] The second model likens the practice of welfare to perception. On this view, to recognize the welfare value inherent in a state of affairs is to perceive the good-making properties that would lead anyone to adopt the state of affairs as a goal. The perception model is perhaps sharpest in Griffin's work on well-being. In *Value Judgment*, for instance, Griffin stipulates that only desires "formed by appreciation of the nature of [their] object" count towards one's well-being, a process that "includes anything necessary to achieve it."[154] Likewise, Darwall describes his own account of what is best for humans as a "quasi-perceptual, felt relation between the person and merit-making values that such activities usually involve."[155] On both the taste and

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[152] The account of the practice of welfare is most directly indebted to discussions in Joseph Raz, *The Practice of Value*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
[153] See section 4.2, 103-6.
[154] It is worth noting that he rejects a strong distinction between understanding and desire. See James Griffin. *Value Judgments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 26.
[155] Stephen Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, 97.

the perception models, the practice of welfare is largely a solitary matter, the purview of self-governing, self-sufficient individuals functioning at the height of their capacities. The story of well-being that I rehearsed in section 2.1 tends to characterize well-being in these terms.

On the view I develop in section 3.2, if one endorses an object, then one favours it, one is positively oriented towards it in thought, feeling, and action, one is motivated to bring it into being, one is pleased when it obtains, and one has pleasant thoughts about it once it has obtained.[156] Richard spends his days working at the Smithsonian cleaning and stabilizing works of arts. In the possible world where Richard endorses his work, he is motivated to start work in the morning, he is pleased when he is working and finds it difficult to leave work at the end of the day, perhaps remembering it fondly now and again when he is away from it. In this first case, my view implies that he is faring well, at least when he is at work. However, in the possible world where Richard does not endorse his work, he finds it difficult to start work in the morning, grumbles as he struggles through his day, and looks forward to stop working as soon as he can at the end of each day. If he happens to remember his work when he is away from it, he finds the memory distasteful. In this second case, my view implies that he is not faring very well. Given two states of affairs he fails to endorse, it may be for the best if he found himself relating to independently valuable objects. However, he would fare much better in a possible world he endorsed.[157]

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[156] See section 3.2, 76.
[157] I explore cases like these in section 3.4.

Call this view *narrow* endorsement. The problem of authority arises when one ignores the bearing of narrow endorsement on well-being. The case of Richard is tragic because he does not endorse the worthy objects in his life. Objective theories fail to capture this judgment because they do not count endorsement as a necessary condition of well-being. In their view, endorsement is at best one good among others. I argued in section 3.3 that what is needed is an account of well-being in which schedules of concern operate as a creative constraint restricting the sort of lives that count as good for Richard. We must assert the endorsement thesis. Under suitable conditions, narrow endorsement must be necessary for well-being in central cases. However, if narrow endorsement were all that there was to the story of well-being, then one could describe the practice of welfare as a solitary pursuit. Welfare subjects would need only to exercise the designated faculties under suitable conditions to fare well. We should not settle for this description of the practice of welfare.

If we model the practice of welfare as a solitary pursuit, we will miss the social interactions that enable and influence practice. I argue in what follows that the practice of welfare is not a solitary but a social enterprise, one that relies on the shared understanding of others for its success. Specifically, welfare subjects rely on others to develop expertise in recognizing good ways to direct one's life and to pursue these successfully. The reader should not take the reference to good lives to indicate that welfare assessments are limited to complete lives. Well-being as endorsing the good is an account of faring well at a time and over a period.

The practice of welfare relies on communities in various ways. Many sources of welfare value would not exist in the absence of related social practices. We could hardly say, for instance, that restoring Venice contributed to Derek's well-being in a possible world that did not contain the practices that produce the related set of human activities. This suggestion amounts to more than the trivial claim that espresso could not contribute to Derek's welfare in a world in which espresso did not exist, though that much is true. The status of Derek's ambition to restore Venice depends not only on The Floating City's existence, but also on the historical forces that brought it into being and established its cultural importance. I have in mind the social practices associated with architecture, art history, conservation, and restoration, and those that influence the significance that Derek imparts to these activities. In the same way, the status of the particular relationships that Derek wants to cultivate depend in part on complex social practices around work, marriage, and friendship, practices that influence not only which emotions and attitudes toward the other are fitting but also the actions appropriate to them.[158]

Most of the ways that Derek relates to states of affairs, and the importance that he accords to them in his schedule of concerns, depend critically on the social practices embedded in culture. In this sense, culture is to community what memory is to the individual. The social practices embedded within it are the tools and ideas that the community amends, shares, and transmits to its members because they once promoted their well-being, practices that constitute in part the

[158] On communal influences on norms surrounding friendship, see *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, 308-13.

nature of well-being.[159] Derek shapes his understanding of welfare value in concert with these communal tools and ideas, at once borrowing and contributing to the conceptual resources that are available for thinking about good ways to direct one's life, authentic standards of self-assessment to adopt, and reliable sources of well-being to pursue. Derek wants to do certain things, and to be a certain kind of person, because he believes and feels that these ends are worthy of concern. He may not be aware fully of the worth of a given goal or object, and his understanding may be imperfect, as may be the understanding of others in the community. Yet, the social practices that underwrite his judgments of worth, however indeterminate, ground his belief and attitudes toward the objects he deems worthy of concern, and his choices both contribute to and transform the practices on which they rely.

Not all of Derek's orientations to the states of affairs that affect him depend on communal practices in this way. The sensory pleasure Derek experiences as he sips his morning espresso on the Canal does not. It is true that he could not enjoy a morning espresso in a world in which no one knew of this simple pleasure, or in which the economic and political institutions supporting the trade of espresso did not exist. It is also true that the judgment that sensory pleasure is in some measure worthy of concern depends in part on social practices. That is, the judgment that some amount of pleasure is likely to be a reliable source of well-being over time depends on what we know about

[159] For a useful discussion of the relationship between culture and subjective well-being, see Harry C. Triandis, "Cultural Syndromes and Subjective Well-being," in Culture and Subjective Well-Being. Edited by Ed Diener and Eunkook M. Suh. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000, 13-37.

pleasure, human psychology, and human lives. However, the experience of sensory pleasure that Derek has when sipping espresso does not depend on social practices in the same way.

We can grasp the relevant sense in which welfare judgments rely on social practices if we reflect on an ambiguity at the heart of the term "endorsement." On my view, narrow endorsement is a set of orientations to states of affairs that affect welfare subjects. However, endorsement also has a *broad* sense of confirming, sanctioning, or vouching for a person, an activity, or an object, in a way that provides an opinion of its nature and value. The judgments of worth that Derek makes are endorsement in a broad sense.

The friend who asks why Derek wants to have an espresso on the Canal Grande, save Venice from the waves, or be a successful parent is not asking one question too many. Rather, he is asking Derek to elaborate on the reasons that justify his broad endorsement of these goods as worthy of concern. He does so because he shares his interest in developing and sustaining the kind of expertise necessary to recognize good ways to direct one's life, authentic standards of self-assessment to adopt, and reliable sources of well-being to pursue. If one were to ask Derek why he was pursuing the complex goods on his schedule of concerns, the response "because I want to pursue them" would ring hollow, as if he had left something unsaid. When Derek endorses a given end as worthy, he is acknowledging tacitly his status as an epistemic agent in a community of actors who share his interest in recognizing good ways to direct their lives. Derek's choices are broad endorsements in the sense of being actions that confirm,

sanction, or vouch for an end as worthy of concern. Granted, one may not always have reasons for what one does. Derek may not be able to justify why he wants to be a successful parent or save Venice from the waves. He may even pursue these goods for no reason or for bad reasons. However, when Derek does justify his pursuits, he makes at least a tacit appeal to their worth as ends for himself and for relevant others, one that relies on and contributes to communal practices surrounding the recognition of good ways to direct one's life and the rest. Communal norms determine in part the nature of welfare.

Derek is not required to answer his friend's questions, of course; he may insist on presenting his preferences as an end of the reason-giving process. However, the legitimacy of even this final appeal relies on a tacit judgment that preference satisfaction itself is an end worthy of concern, one likely to promote one's well-being over time. In individualistic cultures that advocate the primacy of individual experience, for instance, internal psychological attributes are prevalent as a basis of life satisfaction judgments. This is not the case in all cultures. Life satisfaction judgments in collectivistic cultures that view individuals as fundamentally interdependent and socially related are more likely to emphasize external social cues, norms, and expectations.[160] "Because I want to pursue them" is a reasonable justification for one's pursuits only if preference satisfaction is itself worthy of concern, and the force of the justification changes from one community to the next.

[160] Eunkook M. Suk, "Self, the Hyphen between Culture and Subjective Well-Being," in *Culture and Subjective Well-Being*. Edited by Ed Diener and Eunkook M. Suh. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000, 63-87.

Broad endorsements highlight the interdependence of welfare subjects as epistemic agents concerned with developing expertise in choosing their goals, and recognizing good ways to direct their lives. Inquiry into what constitutes a worthy object is a collaborative project, one whose outcome rides largely on one's unavoidable reliance on the expertise and testimony of others.[161] Specifically, welfare subjects rely on the testimony of others to develop expertise in recognizing good ways to direct one's life and to pursue them successfully. This interdependence requires that theories of well-being account for the dynamic relation between the welfare subject, the objects they pursue, and those who share their epistemic labor. As Rawls concedes, welfare subjects appreciate this capacity to stand apart from specific welfare judgments and question whether the ends they pursue are really worth pursuing:

> …citizens recognize one another as having the moral power to have a conception of the good. This means that they do not view themselves as inevitably tied to the pursuit of the particular conception of the good…they espouse at any given time. Instead…they are...capable of revising and changing this conception on reasonable and rational grounds.[162]

Modelling judgments of worth as broad endorsements joins the nature of well-being to a relational account of the welfare subject. Welfare subjects emerge as

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[161] Recent work in naturalized epistemology stresses the pervasiveness of epistemic interdependence, especially due to our unavoidable reliance on testimony. See Lynn Hankinson Nelson. *Who Knows: From Quine to a Feminist Empiricism.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.
[162] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice.* Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, 1971, 544.

individuals in communities who rely on others to develop the necessary intellectual and affective capacities to recognize good ways to direct their lives. Their axiological capacities honed, welfare subjects continue to rely on the testimony of others to exercise them. They take a step back and question their beliefs and dispositions in light of the information, experiences, and arguments that others provide, and contribute their own considered judgments to the mix.

On this view, judgments of worth are intersubjective ideals that play a crucial role in determining the nature of welfare, developing expertise in the pursuit of welfare, and enabling its practice. Much like J.S. Mill's competent judges, welfare subjects who receive the right education and experiences develop expertise in the skillful pursuit of welfare. They learn that there are better or worse ways to live one's life, more or less authentic standards of self-assessment to adopt, and more or less reliable sources of well-being over time. Eventually, they become epistemic authorities in their own right, welfare subjects whose judgments of worth contribute to their community's knowledge about good ways to direct human lives.[163] Unlike Mill's judges, however, epistemic authorities make judgments of worth that guide others to authentic standards and reliable sources of well-being rather than higher pleasures. This process is part of the division of epistemic labor essential to the smooth functioning of complex axiological communities. Welfare subjects cannot develop expertise in the pursuit of welfare in isolation, nor can they acquire all the specialized knowledge they need in order to avoid relying on someone else's testimony as they reflect on the

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[163] John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism.* Edited by R. Crisp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, chapter 2.

best course of action to pursue. It follows that welfare subjects who endorse objects worthy of concern in this sense fare better over time than those who do not.

In keeping with the distinction I introduce in section 2.1, the defining feature of subjective theories is that they make well-being depend on the subject's concerns, whereas objective theories exclude all reference to attitudes and concerns. The conception of worth I develop is intersubjective rather than objective; that is, it is not entirely divorced from schedules of concerns.[164] The view is open to the objection that social forces might warp or corrupt worth such that it no longer truly reflects what matters. I address this objection below. Still, on this view, faring well over time is a function of communal ideals that track authentic standards of self-assessment and reliable sources of well-being. Well-being remains a function of schedules of concerns, at least in an intersubjective sense. Moreover, the account blurs the line between the nature of well-being and the sources of well-being. This is not surprising given the hybrid nature of the account. Subjective theories hold that well-being is a feature of one's response to the objects in one's life; objective theories, a feature of one's relation to independently valuable objects. As a hybrid account, well-being as endorsing worthy goods integrates features of the subject and the object into a single account. The best empirical evidence concerning the standards and objects that are likely to ensure the well-being of the welfare subjects in a given community is what singles out the relevant objects for consideration.

[164] On the distinction between objective and subjective theories, see section 2.1, 27.

The concession that worth is intersubjective rather than objective does not undermine its significance as a solution to the problem of worth and the problem of authority.[165] Endorsement remains necessary for well-being in central cases: Derek fares well at a time to the extent that he endorses the objects in his life. The view does deny the agent sovereignty thesis: Derek's schedule of concerns alone does not entirely determine the nature of his well-being. Moreover, not all objects are axiologically neutral: some objects remain more worthy of pursuit than other objects, and Derek fares well over a period to the extent that he endorses objects worthy of concern. What is critical to Derek's well-being is that he exercises expertise in choosing his goals and in recognizing good ways to direct his life, an expertise he develops in community, one that ultimately contributes to the axiological resources from which he benefits.

Well-being as endorsing worthy goods supplies what was missing from the subjectivist's assessment, namely, an appraisal of the object Derek endorses. Return to the grass-counter example. Given what we know about human psychology, Derek is unlikely to remain positively oriented over time toward grass counting, and he would likely come to regret his decision to join John who is busy at work on the university lawn. Grass counting, we can suppose, is generally not a reliable source of well-being. If Derek abandoned the other items on his schedule of concerns for grass counting, his friends would have good reason to attempt to dissuade him. This judgment is conditional on the most reliable empirical evidence concerning the standards and objects that are likely to ensure

[165] On the problem of worth, see section 2.3, 62.

the well-being of welfare subjects over time. That is not to say that this view is about the means rather than the nature of welfare. Rather, the nature of well-being depends in part on facts about the conditions under which human beings thrive. This condition is meant to address concerns about social forces that might undermine the external norms that the concept of worth is meant to capture.

In sum, Derek's narrow endorsement is necessary for well-being. His orientation to the states of affairs that affect him places a creative constraint restricting what counts as good for him at a time. However, it is not entirely up to his schedule of concern which goods are worthy of his concern. Which goods are likely to comprise reliable sources of well-being and sustain authentic standards of self-assessment depends in part on the community. This part of well-being depends on communal ideals, collective judgments conditional on the most reliable empirical evidence concerning the standards and objects that are likely to ensure the well-being of welfare subjects over time. To paraphrase the chapter's epigraph, we can imagine that Derek thinks of worth as what he admires in his pursuits, something his pursuits would have even if he did not admire them, something they have in themselves. Unlike the narrow endorsements Derek formed under suitable conditions, his broad endorsements can be mistaken. This explains why he seeks evidence for his opinions about the best course to pursue; why he acts as if there is something to discover; why he acts as if there is a fact of the matter about what well-being consists in; and how we might talk of Derek knowing the better course even while he pursues the worse. However, worth in this sense is not generally something his pursuits would have if *no one* admired

them. This part of well-being is not objective in this sense. Rather, well-being as endorsing worthy goods is an intersubjective account of what faring well consists in.

4.4 Objections

One might challenge the descriptive adequacy of the resulting account of well-being. First, perhaps we can grant that welfare judgments involving children presuppose that some objects are more worthy of concern than other objects. After all, children are presumably in greater need of normative guidance, and it is fitting that someone who cares for them safeguard their well-being. However, what reason do we have to accept that the model extends to adults? We must take care lest well-being as endorsing worthy goods sacrifice fidelity for generality in the same way as other accounts of well-being seemingly do. Second, one might worry that the resulting account of well-being violates the weak neutrality criterion for descriptive adequacy. That is, one might worry that it advances unfounded critiques of a welfare subject's concerns. What happens to welfare subjects immersed in racist or sexist societies? If well-being as endorsing worthy goods assigns lexical priority to intersubjective ideals embedded in the community, then so much the worse for the account. The objections identify legitimate concerns; however, I believe the response below highlights the strengths of the account.

First, we can grant that judgments of worth do not fulfil the same function in all welfare judgments. The extent to which one relies on worth in assessing

one's well-being in part reflects the epistemic authority of the welfare subject. Epistemic authority represents one's skill in the pursuit of welfare, one's expertise in choosing one's goals and recognizing good ways to direct one's life. Schedules of concerns are more likely to promote one's well-being over time if the goods one pursues are worthy of concern, that is, if they reflect the most reliable empirical evidence concerning the standards and objects that are likely to ensure the well-being of welfare subjects over time. Questions of worth arise naturally when one considers what it makes sense to want for children for whom one cares because one cannot presuppose that their schedule of concerns is likely to ensure their well-being over time. Worthy goods help welfare subjects develop epistemic authority in the pursuit of well-being, that is, the expertise to recognize good ways to organize their lives. This process of education is necessary and appropriate, since the dispositions of subjects do not always track their well-being over time.

The function of judgments of worth changes when subjects attain some measure of epistemic authority. In normal circumstances, most adults have a sufficient measure of epistemic authority, which explains in part the reluctance to interfere with the schedule of concerns of others. His capacities honed, Derek continues to draw on the epistemic resources embedded in the community, but his relationship to them changes. He continues to use them to shape his schedule of concerns toward authentic standards of self-assessment and reliable sources of well-being. However, he now shapes his understanding of welfare value in concert with his community, at once borrowing and contributing to the

conceptual resources that are available for thinking about good ways to direct his life. He remains open to persuasion, of course. Unless there is reason to believe that his epistemic authority has been undermined, however, it is perhaps best to leave well enough alone.

Next, anxieties concerning weak neutrality misconstrue the social dimensions of welfare judgments. Characterising welfare value as broad endorsements does not assume a right answer about every question concerning welfare value, nor does it assume that community ideals are infallible. The worry seems to assume that broad endorsements accumulate in communal networks, determined and infallible, like entries in a navigation table guiding welfare subjects as they set sail for worthy shores. Certainly, communal ideals will often be determined enough to establish reliably that some goods are more worthy of concern than other goods, and these ideals may conflict with the schedule of concerns of some welfare subjects. However, broad endorsement enables rather than jeopardises the autonomy and the authority of welfare subject.

Communal interactions not only generate and reinforce common values, but they challenge them as well, revising old judgments of worth and extending them to new circumstances. In giving substantive reasons for his choices, Derek asserts his epistemic authority to recommend an object as worthy of concern to others in similar circumstances, and to participate in this process of review and reconsideration. The reason-giving process not only enables his participation in established social practices, but also challenges them, and in time, creates new ones. Ultimately, judgments of worth are *defeasible*. Some will capture the

wisdom of the age, others, its prejudice. The soundness of a particular judgment of worth is conditional on the most reliable empirical evidence concerning the standards and objects that are likely to constitute the well-being of welfare subjects.[166]

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that we could explain the sense in which some objects are more worthy of concern than other objects without rejecting the endorsement thesis. First, I argued that some welfare judgments presuppose that some objects are more worthy of concern than other objects, and that we have good reason to accept this characterisation of welfare judgments. Endorsement figures prominently in welfare judgments, but so do questions concerning the worth of the objects one endorses. Next, I argued that what grounds judgments of worth are intersubjective ideals about faring well over time. The skillful pursuit of welfare is an expertise that one acquires and develops over time. The broad endorsements subjects make under suitable conditions situate them as epistemic authorities in a community of knowers who share an interest in faring well. On this view, judgments of worth play a crucial role in developing expertise in the pursuit of welfare and enabling its practice. Specifically, judgments of worth guide welfare subjects toward authentic standards and reliable sources of well-being.

[166] The recent surge of research in the psychology, economics, and sociology of well-being is generating the kind of evidence that I have in mind. For useful surveys from a philosophical point of view, see Daniel M. Haybron, *The Pursuit* of *Unhappiness.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. See also Sissela Bok, *Exploring Happiness*. Yale: Yale University Press, 2010.

This is a view about the nature of well-being and not merely the means to attain it.

Hence, in most cases, welfare subjects fare well over time when they endorse worthy objects. This claim is consistent with the previous chapter's conclusions. The endorsement thesis is true; the agent sovereignty thesis, false. Under suitable conditions and in central cases, endorsement remains necessary for well-being, and a person's evaluative perspective alone does not determine what is good for that person. Finally, we fare better if we endorse the states of affairs we experience.

If the grass-counter invited me to join him on the lawn of the local university, then, I would politely decline, except out of curiosity, perhaps, and I would try to discover the reasons that motivated my friend's unusual life project. Finding none, I suppose, I would try to empower him to discover worthier pursuits towards which to direct his considerable talents. However well Derek would fare counting grass with John, he would likely fare better if he endorsed a worthier object.

Chapter 5: Endorsing Worthy Goods

5.1 Introduction

My considered view is that we can address the problem of authority and the problem of worth by defending an eirenic view of well-being according to which one fares well at a time and over a period when one endorses goods worthy of concern. This is a hybrid theory of well-being. It provides an account of well-being at a time that strives to bridge the gap between objective and subjective theories.

The second section of the chapter examines the most important current hybrid theories of well-being. I argue that the three theories examined are not theories of well-being at a time. Two are theories about what it is to fare best or what it is to live a successful life, and a third is a theory about the structure of the greatest source of well-being. Moreover, either the theories imply the contentious claim that endorsement and worth have no welfare value on their own, or they provide little guidance on how to deal with the difficult cases that arise from the problem of authority and the problem of worth.

The third section draws on the analysis of previous chapters to summarize an alternate hybrid account of well-being at a time. I describe faring well at a time as endorsing worthy goods. Endorsement and objective value each count toward well-being on their own at least to some extent. However, one generally fares well over time if one endorses worthy goods. I then show that the account can deal with the problem of authority and the problem of worth without

compromising its descriptive adequacy. I close the chapter by discussing some puzzles that the account leaves unresolved.

5.2 Three Hybrid Theories

Others have provided hybrid theories of well-being. Parfit's account is perhaps the most familiar. He relates well-being to both subjective endorsement and objective "facts about [the] value" of the states of affairs one endorses. What is good for someone is "to have knowledge, to be engaged in rational activity, to experience mutual love, and to be aware of beauty, while strongly wanting just these things." [167] According to this view, both endorsements and objective goods are necessary but not sufficient for well-being. This conjunctive account entails that subjective endorsements and objective goods on their own are prudentially worthless. Suppose that reading poetry is objectively valuable; and reading doggerel, worthless. A person who gets no satisfaction from reading poetry does not benefit from the activity, nor does a person who prefers to read doggerel.

Parfit's hybrid account generates a solution to the problem of authority and the problem of worth. Since wanting objective goods is necessary for well-being, it is not possible to fare well and fail to endorse the conditions of one's life. One cannot become alienated from one's well-being. Likewise, one's schedule of concerns alone does not determine one's well-being. The objective value of the objects one endorses matters to one's well-being. However, as I mentioned, the claim that one part of well-being has no welfare value without the other is difficult

[167] Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, 501.

to accept[168] This is the double bind problem. Unendorsed objective goods might not count for much, but why not think they count for a bit? Meanwhile, subjects may fare well when they endorse objective goods, but why not think their concerns alone counts on their own at least to some extent? Surely, I must benefit at least a bit from the reading of doggerel I strongly prefer despite its low objective value, and from the reading of more sophisticated poetry despite my aversion to it.

One might concede that each part of well-being has a bit of value, but that I would fare better if I preferred objectively valuable goods. On this moderate view, I benefit at least to some extent from my unappreciated encounter with poetry and my misguided endorsement of doggerel, but I would have been better off had I preferred Robert Frost over Ogden Nash. Endorsement and objective value on their own count toward my well-being to some extent, but I would fare better if I endorsed goods of greater objective value. Parfit's account precludes this moderate view, however.

The trouble is that the account constructs welfare value exclusively in intentional terms. That is, the only states of affairs that have welfare value are wholes in which one endorses an objectively good object. The account produces a reasonable explanation in the case of Richard, the depressed artist whose tragic life illustrates the problem of authority. Richard relates suitably to objectively valuable objects, remember, but fails to enjoy these goods. The trouble with Richard is that without making his endorsement a necessary

[168] Section 2.2, page 47; section 2.3, page 68.

condition of his well-being, his schedule of concerns does not yet restrict the sort of lives that count as good for him. Parfit's account suggests that Richard fares well only if he takes pleasure or satisfaction in the objective goods in his life. We do not do away with the tragic conditions of his life by plugging him into a pleasure machine for an hour at the end of each day. This seems right. However, Parfit's insistence on the intentional structure of well-being deprives its constitutive parts of *any* welfare value. Endorsement and objective goodness do not matter on their own. This unhappy conclusion would deny the welfare value of the unsophisticated toddler's simple pleasures, and the welfare value of Richard's unendorsed but objectively valuable work.

We can rescue Parfit from the unhappy conclusion if we shift the evaluative focal point of his account from moments to lives, and narrow its scope from what is *good for* a person to what makes a life go *best*. Parfit's account vacillates between these two accounts of well-being; however, his endorsement of global theories of well-being suggests that he means his hybrid theory to be an account of the latter.[169] Global theories hold that what matters to one's well-being are the desires one has about some part of one's life considered as a whole, or about one's whole life.[170] Conversely, local theories hold that what matters to one's well-being is the greatest total net sum of subjective fulfilment. As Parfit well knows, local theories are vulnerable to an analogue of the Repugnant

[169] Compare his initial questions, which he frames in terms of what makes a life go best, with the ultimate description of his compromise in terms of what is good or bad for someone. Parfit, *Reasons and Person*s, 493, 502.
[170] Idem, 498.

Conclusion.[171] On local theories, an indefinitely long life that is barely worth living would trump a short life of an extremely high quality since it would produce the greatest total sum of subjective fulfilment. Parfit believes, rightly, I think, that most people would choose a short life of high quality over an indefinitely long life that is barely worth living. Since global theories imply that the short life would be better, Parfit believes that global theories are more plausible. Global theories also produce intuitive results in the case of addiction. Even if addiction to a particular substance would have no harmful side effects and I provided you with a ready supply, I do not make your life better by making you an addict, though I do increase the sum-total of your desire satisfaction.[172] Once again, Parfit believes that most people would not welcome this kind of addiction. Endorsing global theories commits Parfit to abandoning the notion that the welfare value of a life is entirely determined by the welfare value of the moments contained in that life. The global features of a life are what matters.

The concession has important implications. A descriptively adequate theory of well-being should account for how the contributions of particular welfare goods combine to determine one's overall level of well-being at a time, over a period, and over one's life. Abandoning this requirement limits the account's ability to reconcile the various evaluative focal points we take when making judgments about what is *good for* someone. We are not exactly limited to making

[171] The Repugnant Conclusion holds that "for any possible population of at least ten billion people, all with a very high quality of life, there must be some much larger imaginable population whose existence, if other things are equal, would be better even though its members have lives that are barely worth living." Parfit (1984): 388.
[172] Parfit (1984): 497.

rough comparisons between lives; we can still assess whether someone fares well over a period as a whole. However, we have little guidance on how to assess welfare at a time, or how to reconcile periods and lives. Surely, a theory of well-being can do better.

Narrowing the scope of Parfit's account to what makes a complete life go *best* weakens the strength of this objection. If the intended explanadum is the set of conditions that constitute an optimum human life as a whole, then it is less important that his account capture the instant welfare contributions of the toddler's simple pleasures. One could make the case that, however *good* simple pleasures are at a time for those who experience them, wanting objective goods is what makes a complete life go *best*. Perhaps the global welfare contributions of a lifetime spent wanting and pursuing objectively valuable objects are so great that they dwarf the relative welfare contributions of simple pleasure. In this way, Parfit can resist both the unhappy and the Repugnant Conclusion. However, the victory comes at the cost of abandoning a description of faring well simpliciter.

Finally, the account is susceptible to an objection from weak neutrality. The weak neutrality criterion for descriptive adequacy requires that judgments of worth be justified and impartial.[173] The intent of weak neutrality is to guard against poorly justified and biased accounts of well-being that support unwarranted intrusions in the schedule of concerns of welfare subjects, and impose, dogmatically, a standard discount rate on subjective reports of well-being. Parfit is coy about describing the ground of objective value, content to

[173] I first discuss weak neutrality in section 1.3, 21.

suggest how the subjective and the objective parts of well-being might interact in a single account. Without a more substantial description of facts about value, however, the account is reasonably open to doubt. A functioning hybrid account must not only enable judgments of worth but also safeguard schedules of concerns from unwarranted intrusions.

In *Welfare and Rational Care*, Darwall develops a hybrid account of well-being that goes further in describing what facts about value might consist in. On this account, the concept of welfare consists in what one should want for that person insofar as one cares for them. Darwall suggests that the nature of welfare that best defines the intension of this concept is the so-called Aristotelian thesis, according to which what is best for someone is a life of "significant engagement in activities through which one comes into appreciative rapport with agent-neutral values."[174] Such "valuing activity" is "the most important source of welfare," and a life of such activity, "the most beneficial human life."[175]

Valuing activity involves two agent-neutral values distinct from welfare value. Merit is a kind of value that persons and actions have in virtue of relating to objects that are intrinsically worthy of esteem, emulation, admiration, and praise. Hence, it bears an essential connection to distinctive evaluative attitudes, such as respecting, appreciating, promoting, honoring, or cherishing. We can grasp the evaluative dimension of merit if we contrast it with other states of affairs we deem intrinsically valuable. Most pluralistic accounts of welfare would count the pleasure one gets from a warm shower on a cold morning and the

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[174] Darwall (2006): 7, 75.
[175] Idem, 80.

pleasure one gets from a creative undertaking as intrinsically valuable. However, the pleasure one gets from writing a play has a kind of value that the pleasure of a warm shower lacks. Only the former is intrinsically *estimable*, an enviable status it derives from its relation to a more fundamental value, namely, the value of worth. Darwall's conception of worth involves a kind of significance or importance that something has in virtue of being valued, for example, as an appropriate object of care, a characteristic shared by persons, music, and merit, among other things.

The upshot of Darwall's account is an axiology that identifies two kinds of intrinsically valuable objects: a basic class of worthy objects; and a second class of meritorious persons or actions properly oriented to or guided by the first.[176] Unlike welfare value, which Darwall ties to the perspective of someone who cares for the person, merit and worth correspond to no particular perspective. These are agent-neutral values. Insofar as they are normative for distinctive evaluative attitudes, they are normative for such attitudes from anyone's perspective.[177] Much like the goods of objectivists, merit and worth are valuable regardless of one's concerns.[178] Thus, merit and worth enjoy the special status of common values. Since they correspond to no particular perspective, communities can share the recognition and appreciation of these values. For example, parenting has merit because it responds appropriately to the worth of children.

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[176] Darwall's account of welfare is structurally similar to Hurka's recursive theory of virtue, which starts with a base-clause affirming a set of intrinsic goods, then adds a recursion-clause about the intrinsic goodness of a certain attitude to what is good. See Hurka, *Vice, Virtue and Value.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, chapter 1.
[177] Darwall (2006): 98.
[178] Section 2.2, page 34.

Since merit also has worth, parents whose actions appropriately respond to the importance of their children as worthy of care also have worth as such, as do those who appreciate the merit of good parenting. In this way, the appreciation of merit and worth tends to create "coherent structures of mutually supporting prudential values."[179]

Like Parfit, Darwall suggests that the most important sources of well-being have an intentional structure, though his account is more complex. Valuing activity involves a preference for worthy activities, an appropriate evaluative response to their worth, and a correct belief about their worth.[180] Hence, the account generates a Parfit-style solution to the problem of authority and the problem of worth. Since valuing activity includes a robust endorsement of worthy states of affairs, it is not possible for one to live the best kind of life yet fail to endorse the conditions of one's life. Likewise, one's schedule of concerns alone does not determine one's well-being. The worth of the states of affairs one endorses matters. However, valuing activity does not deny the intrinsic welfare value of less intricate states of affairs. Strictly speaking, only the most important sources of welfare have a hybrid structure. Neither endorsement nor worth are necessary for well-being simpliciter.

The qualification allows Darwall to reach for the more moderate view that Parfit's account precludes. Darwall can deal with the double bind problem. One can benefit if one never endorses the goods in one's life, if one endorses unworthy goods, or if one's endorsement falls short of the robust intellectual and

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[179] Darwall (2006) : 103.
[180] Idem, 89.

emotional conditions that characterise valuing activity. Happy toddlers benefit from simple pleasures; Tom, from illusory satisfaction; Richard, from the unappreciated yet worthy goods in his life; and I, from my passion for doggerel. The concessions are consistent with the claim that welfare subjects fare best when they endorse more worthy states of affairs. The most important benefits are organic unities consisting of worthy activities and an appreciation of their relation to worth, "a quasi-perceptual, felt relation between the person and the merit-making values that such activities involve."[181]

Unfortunately, the qualification also limits the account's capacity to address controversial cases involving merely faring well at a time. For instance, the claim that illusory satisfaction has welfare value is consistent with the assertion of the endorsement and agent sovereignty theses; the claim that one benefits from unappreciated worthy activities, with their denial. Once again, narrowing the account's intended explanandum from faring well to faring best diminishes the force of this objection. Darwall's account is perhaps best understood as an account of what constitutes the most important sources of well-being, a concession that limits its descriptive adequacy as an account of faring well at a time. Moreover, the account fits some welfare subjects better than others. Darwall presupposes a welfare subject clever enough to produce the complex epistemic and evaluative states necessary for well-being, which limits the generality of his account. We should strive to describe the relation between

[181] Idem, 97.

endorsed experience, worth, and well-being in a framework that captures their relative importance at a time without limiting descriptive adequacy.

Finally, Darwall's account is susceptible to an objection from weak neutrality. Its merits notwithstanding, valuing activity takes the existence of worth as given, and makes no attempt to ferret out its ground. We know that worth is a kind of importance something has in virtue of being deemed intrinsically significant, but we know little about who does the deeming, or how one should address conflicts between one deeming and another. The omission impedes an assessment of whether judgments of worth are warranted, or merely dogmatic intrusions on schedules of concerns.

Dworkin's model of challenge is more explicit about the communal ground of the objective part of well-being. On this account, faring well consists in leading a successful life, which exhibits the right mix of volitional and critical interests. Volitional interests capture what one wants to do; critical interests, what one should do in order to have the right kind of life.[182] For Dworkin, the two parts of well-being are axiomatic, and they intersect in various ways. Some measure of success in what one happens to want very much is critically important, and what one wants tends to track what one thinks reflects one's critical interests. Acting on present interest or desires does not always conflict with acting on one's critical interests, but the two can also conflict. In such cases, there is no higher standard to decide between them. When the akratic is tempted to act against his critical

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[182] Dworkin writes in terms of ethical value rather than welfare value, but his notion of critical interests makes a recognizable appeal to the concept of welfare, that is, what it is to fare well. Ronald Dworkin. *Sovereign Virtue*. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2000: 244.

interests, we can appeal to no higher-order concept to adjudicate between what he wants to do and what he thinks he should do in order to have a successful life. The model of challenge considers one's life successful only if one's performance is skillful, that is, only if it displays the features characteristic of meeting the challenge of living well under the circumstances. "Living a life is itself a performance that demands skill," Dworkin writes; "it is the most comprehensive and important challenge we face, and…our critical interests consist in the achievements, events, and experiences that mean that we have met the challenge well."[183]

No simple algorithm exists to determine the contribution of a given performance to the success of a life, or the conditions for a performance's successful realisation, though culture will carry some of the discriminations necessary to make the relevant distinctions. Relevant circumstances include one's health, physical power, length of life, material resources, friendships and associations, commitments, family and communal traditions, the social, and the legal and cultural system in which one lives.[184] Circumstances both shape and constrain what counts as a successful life in a particular case.

Though the model is relatively indeterminate, it allows for subtle judgments in assessing the success of a life. For instance, the contribution of a particular invention to a life's success might include its degree of technical difficulty, its originality, the degree to which it taxed the abilities of the inventor, the intensity of her dedication, or the way in which the work connected to a

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[183] Idem, 253.
[184] Idem, 260.

particular community or tradition.[185] In assessing a given performance, cultural norms do not necessarily take lexical priority over individual schedules of concerns. The considerations that go into the assessment of a life are indexed to culture in some way, but they are open to revision. Pursuing one's concerns in the face of opposing cultural norms can generate an especially apt life performance, one that changes the prevailing views of what constitutes a successful life. Just as we expect artists to expand what the tradition counts as a skillful performance, so too can we expect that some people's lives will challenge what a community counts as a successful life.

The upshot is a metaphysically modest account of the conditions that govern more substantive judgments about the success of a life. The model of challenge is not obviously partial to one form of life. Much like the worth condition I describe in the fourth chapter, the parameters of a skillful performance are intersubjective and dynamic: a particular performance can revise the rules that govern what a successful performance consists in much an artist's work can change the parameters of artistic merit.[186] Meanwhile, Dworkin insists that the model need not have elitist or paternalistic implications – as if living well were only possible for great souls – nor need it reduce prudential value to aesthetic value. It takes seriously the idea that one should make of one's life an original work of art without assuming that less original lives must be less successful ones.[187]

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[185] Idem, 256.
[186] See section 4.3.
[187] Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, 259.

Dworkin’s model generates a solution to the problem of authority. Its support for the endorsement thesis is explicit: a good cannot make one’s life better against one’s belief or feeling that it does not. This claim follows from the analogy between living and performing. “Intention is part of performance,” writes Dworkin, ”we do not give credit to a performer for some feature of his performance that he was struggling to avoid, or would not recognize, even in retrospect, as good or desirable.”[188] Endorsement might take place counterfactually or in hindsight, but it is necessary for one to fare well. It follows that one cannot become alienated from one’s well-being.

Likewise, the model generates a solution to the problem of worth. One’s schedule of concerns alone does not determine one’s well-being; the source of one’s well-being also matters. One might be mistaken in believing or feeling one’s life is a good one, because either one mistakenly counts something as good, or one fails to recognize and respond to contextual features that, if recognized, would have made one’s life better. What matters is that one achieves ethical integrity, that one lives out of the conviction that the central features of one’s life are appropriate to one’s circumstances, that no other life one might live would be a better response to those circumstances rightly judged.[189]

The performance analogy central to Dworkin’s model is at once an asset and a liability. First, the analogy subtly shifts the evaluative focal point of welfare assessments from moments to complete lives. As in previous hybrid accounts of well-being, the greatest welfare comes from states of affairs in which the

[188] Idem, 268.
[189] Dworkin (2000): 270-4.

subjective coincides with the objective over time, that is, a life in which one's volitional interests coincide with one's critical interests. This strengthens its merits as an account of what the best kind of life consists in, but it limits its descriptive adequacy as an account of faring well at a time. One wants to assess the lives of existential heroes, who make the most of their circumstances and secure achievements that meet and revise the standards by which one takes the measure of a life. Yet one wants also to assess whether these heroes fared well at a time, and determine the relation between their well-being at a time and over a period. The account is less well suited for this second task.[190]

Moreover, like Darwall's account of welfare as rational care, Dworkin's account of welfare as a successful performance is susceptible to the objection that it fits some welfare subjects better than others. There is an implicit demand that one shape, contour, and in some sense control one's life according to some plan or blueprint that makes the most of one's circumstances. This limits the account's descriptive adequacy. A toddler snuggled under a warm blanket fares well at a time despite the fact that the state of affairs does not figure in a rational life plan. If we are to capture welfare judgments involving a variety of subjects, we will need to escape from the tyranny of the well-planned life.

Next, the analogy allows Dworkin to reach for only a part of the moderate view, according to which each part of well-being counts at least a bit without the other. The double bind problem strikes again. Volitional interests matter to one's

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[190] To be fair, Dworkin is more concerned with the question of whether political liberals can have a substantive conception of well-being given their commitment to neutrality than with giving a descriptively adequate account of welfare. Idem, 237-8.

well-being to some extent, but unendorsed critical interests do not. That is, some measure of success in getting what one wants matters, but a successful performance whose features one does not endorse does not matter. It follows that the happy toddler's simple pleasures make at least some contribution to his well-being, but Richard's unusually reluctant performance does not. Once again, narrowing the account's explanandum from faring well to faring best diminishes the force of these objections. We can take seriously the suggestion that a successful life is one in which no other life one might live would be a better response to one's circumstances rightly judged, but only at the cost of the model's descriptive adequacy as an account of faring well at a time.

5.3 Endorsing Worthy Goods

One way to understand where previous hybrid theories diverge from the one I describe is to appeal to the formality criterion for descriptive adequacy. In section 1.3, I argue with Sumner that a theory of well-being should meet a formality criterion. That is, it should complete the following formula:

> where ***S*** is the welfare subject and ***x*** is the object affording harm or benefit, an account of well-being ***W*** must explain the property that makes ***x*** *good or bad for* ***S*** at a time or interval ***t***, and how the particular contributions of a given object determines the overall level of well-being of ***S*** over time.[191]

[191] Section 1.3, page 8.

Extant hybrid theories of well-being define a different relation. Parfit's account describes what it is to fare best over a life; Dworkin, what it is to lead a successful life; Darwall's, the property that makes ***x*** *best* for ***S*** at a time or interval ***t***. The first two are global relations that describe a view of the highest well-being over a more or less complete life. The third is a description of the structure of most important source of well-being. The accounts are important in their own right, but their descriptive adequacy as accounts of well-being *sans phrase* is limited.

Moreover, the welfare subject each account envisions limits its descriptive adequacy. This difficulty is most noticeable in Dworkin. Welfare as skillful performance applies best to adults with highly developed affective and cognitive capacities and the inclination to shape the contours of their experience into a well-planned life. Not all welfare subjects have these capacities or this inclination, yet we can speak meaningfully of their welfare. A toddler snuggled safely under a warm blanket is faring well at a time despite the fact that her affective and cognitive capacities are relatively undeveloped and the shape of her life largely undetermined. Finally, the record of each account on the problem of authority, the problem of worth, and the double bind problem is mixed.

How well does well-being as endorsing worthy goods meet the analytic criteria outlined in the first two chapters? Well-being as endorsing worthy goods is not a view of the highest well-being, that is, it is not an account of what makes a life go best. It is not an account of what counts as a successful life. It is an account of what faring well-consists in at a time. This formulation meets the

formality criterion for descriptive adequacy. It holds that ***x*** benefits ***S*** at ***t*** if ***x*** stands in relation ***W*** to ***S*** at ***t,*** where ***W*** meets the following two conditions:

(1) ***S*** endorses ***x*** under suitable conditions, and

(2) ***x*** is worthy of ***S***'s concern.

What is the relation between faring well at a time and faring well over a period or over a life? On this account, the particular welfare contributions of moments combine to determine the overall level of well-being of ***S*** in a particular domain, over an extended period, and over the life of ***S***. Whether we are satisfied with mere summation will depend on how much weight we place on the problem of aggregation. However, well-being as endorsing worthy goods allows for the possibility that each part of well-being counts at least to some extent in the absence of the other, and it defines the worth condition in a way that does not warrant dogmatic intrusions on schedules of concerns. I describe each condition briefly.

The first condition defines a pluralistic account of endorsement. If one endorses an object, then one favours it, one is positively oriented towards it in thought, feeling, and action, one is motivated to bring it into being, one is pleased when it obtains, and one has pleasant thoughts about it.[192] I argued that endorsement in this sense requires that one experience a state of affairs in order to benefit from it. The reason that I do not benefit from the satisfaction of my desire that a stranger met briefly fare well is that it does not *affect* my experience. In a limited sense, experience delineates the boundaries of well-being. This

[192] For a defence of defining endorsement in attitudinal term, see section 3.2.

experience may be dispositional rather than occurrent. This caveat allows for cases like flow states, in which subjects benefit from a mental state to which they are positively oriented only in hindsight. The experience may also be counterfactual. This allows for cases like Tom's, in which more information would change their assessment of the conditions of their lives. For instance, if learning that his family and friends deceived him affects Tom's experience of the conditions of his life, then he does not fare well after all.

Endorsement as favouring is a pluralistic account of the subjective part of well-being. It does not insist on describing favouring as a single distinctive evaluative state or a necessary conjunction of such states. In some cases, the obtaining of a single dimension will be sufficient to warrant the claim that a subject favours a state of affairs; in most cases, several conditions will be jointly sufficient. The upshot is a descriptively adequate account of endorsement that can capture the wide range of evaluative states characteristic of different welfare subjects from the animal to the human, the fetus to the senior. The favourings of children may be simpler than those that adults experience, but they are no less significant. The dimension of favouring we emphasize will depend on the state of affairs under consideration, and the purpose for which one is conducting the analysis. The requirement that favouring occur under suitable conditions concedes that some favourings are susceptible to procedural mistakes. The upshot is an account of endorsement that makes the most of relevant differences between welfare subjects without sacrificing generality for the sake of fidelity.

The second condition defines worth in terms of an intersubjective ideal independent from one's actual endorsements. This ideal in part constitutes the nature of welfare. It guides welfare subjects to authentic standards of self-assessment and reliable sources of well-being, and it plays a crucial role in developing expertise in the pursuit of welfare and enabling the practice of welfare value. One fares well over time when one endorses worthy goods. The concept of worth reflects the point that the skillful pursuit of welfare is an expertise that one acquires and develops over time, and that one practices in community. The endorsements that subjects make under suitable conditions situate them as epistemic authorities in a community of knowers who share an interest in faring well. These are *broad* endorsements: they are actions that confirm, sanction, or vouch for an end as likely to generate authentic standards of self-assessment and lead to reliable sources of well-being.

Most of the ways that one relates to states of affairs, and the importance that one accords to them in one's schedule of concerns, depend critically on the social practices embedded in culture. In this sense, culture is to community what memory is to the individual. The social practices embedded within it are the tools and ideas that the community amends, shares, and transmits to its members because they once promoted their well-being.

How well does well-being as endorsing worthy goods meet the analytic criteria I defend in the first two chapters? I will consider the three problems first and the criteria for descriptive adequacy second.

First, it deals with the problem of authority by recognizing that endorsement is necessary for well-being in central cases. Next, it deals with the problem of worth by recognizing that not all goods are on equal axiological footing. Some goods have more worth than other goods; that is, some goods are more likely to lead the welfare subject to authentic standards of self-assessment and reliable sources of well-being. What is critical to one's well-being is that one exercises expertise in choosing one's goals and in recognizing good ways to direct one's life, an expertise one develops in community. Judgments concerning the worth of an object are defeasible. The soundness of a judgment of worth is conditional on the most reliable empirical evidence concerning the standards and objects that are likely to constitute the well-being of welfare subjects over time. As one develops expertise in making judgments of worth, one ultimately contributes to the axiological resources from which one benefits, confirming some judgments, revising others.

Next, well-being as endorsing worthy goods deals with the double bind problem in two ways. First, it accepts that independently valuable goods do not count toward well-being in the absence of endorsement. Consider two nearly identical states of affairs, each of which I equally fail to endorse. One contains objective goods and the other does not. I have reason to pursue the objectively good state of affairs, but only because it contains values other than welfare values. This concession is necessary to secure the solution to the problem of authority.

Now, it is difficult to imagine recommending the life of the grass-counter to others because of a nagging sense that the grass-counter does not fare as well as he could fare. Our concerns are not all that matters to our well-being. In some cases, the worth of the object of those concerns also matters. We can explain our reaction to the case of the grass-counter if we accept a discontinuity in welfare value between what I call “low fare” and “full fare.” In the central case, faring well involves both endorsement and goods. Call the great contribution that endorsement and worth make together “full fare.” It is also true that endorsement on its own counts toward well-being, though it counts for less than the unity. Call the small contribution that endorsement makes on its own “low fare.” This discontinuity is necessary to deal with the double bind problem without abandoning the endorsement thesis. On this view, the grass-counter fares well since we are supposing that he endorses his worthless activity, but he experiences a relatively low amount of welfare. The discontinuity in welfare value not only explains why the disillusioned artist fares much better in any state of affairs she does endorse; it also explains why it is difficult to imagine recommending the life of the grass-counter to others. However well he fares, he would fare much better if he endorsed a more worthy state of affairs.

Second, well-being as endorsing worthy goods allows that endorsement itself is in some degree worthy of concern. Enjoying seemingly neutral or worthless objects will contribute to one’s well-being. I might think that comic books are nearly worthless objects of concern, yet I might fare well to the extent that I enjoy them with relish. Subjects may fare well when they endorse worthy

goods, but their endorsements counts at least to some extent toward their well-being. Given the choice of two states of affairs in which one fails to concern oneself with a valuable object, it must be the case that one fares better in the state of affairs one endorses than the one that one does not.

The treatment of the double bind problem has an interesting implication. The asymmetry in welfare contributions between unendorsed but worthy states of affairs and endorsed states affairs implies that the disillusioned artist would fare better reading comic books than engaging in drudgery work whose product she does not endorse, however worthy it might be. This implication is necessary to prevent a resurgence of the problem of authority. If the disillusioned artist would fare better engaging in drudgery work whose product she did not endorse, she would fare better if she remained alienated from her well-being than if she endorsed worthless goods. Well-being as endorsing worthy goods is preoccupied with ascribing worth to objects without alienating the subject from her well-being. Given the agent-relativity of well-being, it must be the case that her well-being is good *for her*.

I argued throughout that endorsing worthy goods is a descriptively adequate theory of well-being. As an account of faring well at a time, it meets the formality criterion: ***S*** fares well at a time if ***S*** endorses ***x*** under suitable conditions, and ***x*** is worthy of ***S***'s concern. As a pluralistic account of endorsement, it acknowledges the diversity of subjective evaluative states that welfare subjects experience. The upshot is a relatively general account of well-being that allows us to discuss a range of welfare judgments and capture the

well-being of different kinds of sentient animals at different stages of life. Next, the worth condition captures the intuition that not all objects are axiologically neutral: some objects are more worthy of concern than other objects. I argued that this intuition is more faithful to common intuitions about well-being. It is important to note that well-being as endorsing worthy goods captures the idea that each composite of endorsement and worthy goods is an organic unity that contributes much more welfare value than endorsement alone. The value of the two together is not just the sum of the parts such that the view reduces to a list theory whose members can be combined in ways that are better or worse for the welfare subject.

Finally, endorsing worthy goods does not obviously violate the weak neutrality criterion for descriptive adequacy; that is, it does not obviously favour a given form of life. The concept of worth may be indexed to a given community, but its details are defeasible and open to revision. Welfare subjects who have attained a measure of epistemic authority can contribute to the community's knowledge about good ways to direct human lives. They can explore the ground and implications of the claim that a given object is more worthy of concern than another object, weigh it critically against the most reliable empirical evidence concerning the standards and objects that are likely to ensure the well-being of welfare subjects over time, and come to their own conclusions.

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Experience

Consulting Analyst	Info Tech Research Group	2013 –
Doctoral Candidate	The University of Western Ontario	2006 – 13
Sessional Faculty	The University of Western Ontario	2010 – 13
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Military Service	Logistics and Air Movements	1992 – 02

Education

PhD	Philosophy	The University of Western Ontario	2013

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Dissertation sketch: Common views define faring well either in terms of one's preferences or in terms of the objective value of the goods in one's life. My research shows that in fact the core variable is the endorsement of goods worthy of concern. This finding allows the formulation of welfare judgments sensitive to relevant differences in welfare subjects.

MA	Philosophy	The University of Western Ontario	2006
BA	Philosophy (honors)	Acadia University	2005
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Research Activities

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“Well-Being and Authority.” *Graduate Philosophy Conference.* University of Windsor (March 2012).

“Endorsement, Worth and Well-Being.” *Poster Presentation: Arts and Humanities Research Day*. The University of Western Ontario (March 2012).

Commentary: Alexandre Sayegh (Université de Montréal). “Eradicating Global Poverty: Ideal or Non-Ideal Theory?” *Canadian Philosophical Association.* University of New Brunswick (June 2011).

“The Damage Done: Intravenous Drug-Use, Harm Reduction, and Well-Being.” *Canadian Society for the Study of Practical Ethics*, University of New Brunswick (June 2011).

“Subjectivity and Well-Being.” *Philosophy Graduate Student Association.* The University of Western Ontario (March 2011).

“Why not Hedonism?” *Philosophy Graduate Student Association.* The University of Western Ontario (March 2010).

“The Heterogeneity Problem in Plato’s *Philebus.*” *The Upper Canadian Society for Ancient and Medieval Studies.* The University of Western Ontario (February 2010).

Commentary: Ryan Middleton (Queen’s University). “The Problem of Middle-level Ends in the *Nicomachean Ethics.*” *Graduate Conference for the History of Philosophy.* The University of Western Ontario (March 2008).

“Hume on the Ideal Observer.” *Philosophy Graduate Student Association.* The University of Western Ontario (March 2007).

Commentary: Kyle Mennen (University of Toronto). “Problems for Michael Smith’s Theory of Moral Motivation.” *Graduate Conference for Ethics and the History of Philosophy.* The University of Western Ontario (March 2007).

3. *Pedagogical Presentations*

"Teaching Critical Thinking in the Disciplines." *Future Professor Seminar*, The University of Western Ontario Teaching Support Centre (Each March 2008 – 11).

"The Evil of Indifference and the Ethics of International Development" *Teaching Master Class for Graduate Students*, The University of Western Ontario Teaching Support Centre (October 2010).

"Teaching you own course: challenges and possibilities." *Future Professor Seminar*, The University of Western Ontario Teaching Support Centre (June 2010).

"The Metaphors of Business Ethics: Exploring Perspective-Taking in Case-based Teaching." *Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) Annual Conference*, The University of Windsor (June 2008).

"The Ethics of Teaching." *Winter Graduate Conference on Teaching*, The University of Western Ontario (January 2008).

"Discussion as a Way of Teaching." *Winter Graduate Conference on Teaching*, The University of Western Ontario (January 2008).

"Facilitating Difficult Discussions." *Winter Graduate Conference on Teaching*, The University of Western Ontario (January 2007).

4. Teaching Experience

a. Sessional Faculty — The University of Western Ontario

A Brief History of Drug Use	2013
Business Ethics (Online)	2013
Business Ethics	2011
The Metaphysics, Epistemology of Witchcraft	2010
Philosophical Theories of Evil	2010
The Philosophy of Terrorism	2010

b. Sessional Faculty — Huron University College

Perspectives on Happiness	2012
The History of Political Philosophy	2012
Business Ethics	2008 – 13

c. Instructor — Western Teaching Support Centre

Teaching Assistant Training Programs	2006 – 12

d. Teaching Assistant — The University of Western Ontario

Biomedical Ethics	2008 – 09
Introduction to Philosophy	2007 – 08
Critical Thinking	2006 – 07
Business Ethics	2006
Questions of the Day	2005

e. Teaching Assistant — Huron University College

Critical Thinking — 2009

f. Teaching Assistant — Acadia University

Introduction to Philosophy — 2004 – 05

e. Guest lectures — The University of Western Ontario

Introduction to Ethics and Value Theory	Mar 2011
Questions of the Day	Nov 2010
Questions of the Day	Oct 2010
Introduction to Philosophy	Feb 2009

5. Research Groups

Upper Canadian Society for Ancient and Medieval Studies	2005 – 2012
Reading Group, Rotman Institute of Philosophy	2010 – 2012
French Translation Seminar	2012

6. Honors and Awards

a. The University of Western Ontario

Western Graduate Research Scholarships ($27,763)	2005 – 10
Great Ideas for Teachings	2008
Ontario Graduate Scholarship ($15,000)	2006 – 07

b. Acadia University

University Medal in Philosophy	2005
Gregory Doane Hatfield Prize in Creative Writing	2003 – 05
Kirconnell Scholarship ($3000)	2004
Preston Warren Prize in Philosophy	2004
Sgt. Philip Sydney Beals Memorial Prize in Poetry	2004

c. Royal Military College of Canada

Regular Officer Training Scholarship ($50,000)	1992 – 97

7. Graduate Course Work

20th Century Moral Philosophy
20th Century Value Theory
Ancient Practical Reason
Aristotelian Logic
Aristotle's Worst Idea
Contemporary Value Theory
Dennett and Fodor
Ethics, Rationality and Context
Hume: Ethics and Passions
Moral Contextualism
Plato's Epistemology
Probability and Evidence
Re-reasoning Ethics
Research Seminar
Sidgwick's Ethics
Stoics and Epicureans

8. Professional Societies

American Philosophical Association	2011 – 2013
Canadian Philosophical Association	2011 – 2013
Society for the Study of Practical Ethics	2011 – 2013
Rotman Institute of Philosophy	2010 – 2013

9. Volunteering

Sexual Assault Centre of London, Board Member	2013 –
English Conversation Leader, Western Student Success Centre	2007 – 12
Needle Exchange, London Regional HIV Aids Connection	2010
Academic Tutor	2010 – 11

10. Languages

Fluent: French, English