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# Realizing What Matters

Benjamin M. Yelle

*University of Miami*, [BenYelle@gmail.com](mailto:BenYelle@gmail.com)

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

REALIZING WHAT MATTERS

By

Benjamin Yelle

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

December 2014



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

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

REALIZING WHAT MATTERS

Benjamin Yelle

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Harvey Siegel, Ph.D.  
Professor of Philosophy

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Slote, Ph.D.  
Professor of Philosophy

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bradford Cokelet, Ph.D.  
Professor of Philosophy

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Kraut, Ph.D.  
Professor of Philosophy  
Northwestern University

\_\_\_\_\_  
Daniel Haybron, Ph.D.  
Professor of Philosophy  
Saint Louis University

\_\_\_\_\_  
M. Brian Blake, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

YELLE, BENJAMIN  
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Two thoughts dominate much of the literature on well-being: “What is good for an individual depends upon what that individual is like” and “In some cases an individual is worse off because she is deprived of some putatively essential or basic good even if she cannot be brought to appreciate this fact.” This work is an attempt to capture both of these intuitions to a greater extent than prior theories of well-being. Many well-being theorists call the first thought “the subjective intuition” and consider the latter to concern our intuitions about “deprivation.” While many theories of well-being are able to capture the subjective intuition, e.g. Railton’s desire-satisfactionism or Crisp’s sensational-hedonism, they often do so at the cost of not being able to explain and justify our intuitions about deprivation. Conversely, objective theories of well-being, e.g. objective-list and Eudaimonist accounts, offer substantive accounts of “the good life” which, while allowing them to explain and justify our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation, do so at the cost of failing to capture the subjective intuition.

In light of this, one might wonder whether it is possible for a theory of well-being to completely cohere with both intuitions. I argue that there are two incommensurable standards underlying each intuition, i.e. the standard set by either an individual’s idiosyncratic makeup (i.e. “what she is like”) or the standards that apply to a particular class to which she belongs (e.g. what deprivation consists in, for members of that class), and that appeals to them yield conflicting judgments. An

important upshot of this is that there is a sense in which no theory can entirely capture both the subjective intuition and our intuitions about deprivation. In light of this, it is my view that philosophers must come to terms with the tension that exists between the two intuitions and work to develop a theory that best accommodates them both at the same time to the greatest extent possible. My approach, treating well-being as self-realization, does just this.

I defend a novel, broadly subjectivist, theory of well-being which is motivated by the idea that what is good (i.e. prudentially valuable) for an individual depends upon what that individual *is like*, e.g. what she cares about, attaches importance to, regards as mattering, structures her life around, i.e. what she *values*. I argue that the best way to capture this idea is to maintain that an individual's well-being consists in that individual's "self-realization," specifically, the realization of that individual's values. The primary virtue of this approach, and an important gap that it fills in the literature on well-being, is its ability to capture to a greater extent than competitor theories *both* the subjective intuition and our intuitions about deprivation. It is able to do this because of its focus on individuals' values. By focusing on an individual's values, which I describe as those aspects of her psychological and volitional makeup that she is autonomous in relation to and which are properly attributable to her, well-being as self-realization is able to capture the subjective intuition. This is because a person's values are central to "what she is like." Well-being as self-realization is able to respect and capture our intuitions about deprivation because, like many objective theorists in the Neo-Aristotelian tradition, e.g. Foot, Hursthouse, Kraut, etc., it recognizes the importance of the development and exercise of cognitive, affective, and volitional capacities (e.g. a capacity for autonomy), which are constitutive of personhood and of an individual's well-being *qua* person.

This is dedicated to my friends and family, the people who taught me how to live well.



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## Introduction

“There is no knowledge so hard to acquire as the knowledge of how to live this life well and naturally.”

- Michel de Montaigne

A theory of well-being ought to be sensitive to the nature of its subject. Applied to us, it ought to be sensitive to *our* nature and those things that we take to be central to what makes our lives go best. Ideally, this sensitivity will ensure that the theory is normatively adequate. A theory’s normative adequacy depends, I believe, upon its ability to explain and justify two central intuitions we have about our well-being: the “subjective intuition,” and the “deprivation intuition.” Put broadly, the subjective intuition is the idea that individuals have “evaluative authority” over what is good for them such that, for example, a subject’s evaluative judgments<sup>1</sup> about his life determine what is prudentially valuable for him. The deprivation intuition, on the other hand, involves two ideas. First, that individuals are normally worse off when they are deprived of some putatively basic good(s) that they need to flourish, and, second, that some people who are deprived of basic goods really are worse off even though they cannot be brought to appreciate the value of what they are missing, i.e. deprived of.

The subjective and deprivation intuitions are obviously in tension, and I believe that most extant theories of well-being are unsatisfactory because they do not face up to this fact. Specifically, while most theories give pride of place to one intuition and more or less discount the other, I hold that a normatively adequate and intuitively compelling theory of well-being should give us an account of, and help us respect or find a rational tradeoff between, the two intuitions. In what follows, I offer

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<sup>1</sup> As we will see, most theorists idealize these in one way or another.

an account that does just that: I will argue that the best way to understand and respect the pull of both intuitions is to consider our well-being *qua* person.<sup>2,3</sup>

Advocating for my “person-centered” theory of well-being consists of three primary parts. First, in chapter one I offer an initial formulation of this theory, which I call “well-being as self-realization,” and describe some of the general ways in which it is more attractive than competitor theories. These considerations are *initial* and general because both my theory’s details and the ways in which it is superior to competitor theories are developed throughout the following chapters as I compare and contrast my theory with other prominent theories of well-being. Because some of the more prominent theories of well-being, e.g. Eudaimonist theories, consider our well-being *qua* human, I begin by arguing that our natures *qua* human, *qua* person, and *qua* our idiosyncratic makeup, provide distinct standards against which one can make judgments concerning our well-being. These judgments can *roughly* be divided into two types: those that concern the **constitution** of an individual’s well-being (i.e. what its constituents are) and those that **evaluate** a particular individual’s level of well-being (i.e. those that gauge how well or badly an individual is faring). Judgments concerning the constitution of an individual's well-being are offered in response to questions such as “What does a particular individual X’s well-being consist in?” These judgments, i.e. answers to this question, allow one to answer the related question “is some putative good Y “suited to” some particular individual X?” Judgments concerning the evaluation of an individual's well-being gauge that individual's level of well-being and are offered in response to questions such as “Is some particular individual X flourishing or deprived of some good(s)?” Ideally, both

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<sup>2</sup> That is, what our well-being consists in as persons.

<sup>3</sup> Importantly, I argue that one’s well-being considered *qua* member of the human species and considered *qua* person will quite often deliver different verdicts about an individual’s well-being.

sorts of judgments will capture both the subjective intuition<sup>4</sup> and our intuitions about deprivation. The best way to do this, I maintain, is to consider our well-being *qua* person and hold that our well-being *qua* person consists in our “self-realization,” i.e. the realization of that which is most central to our nature as persons. Accordingly, in what follows I give an account of our nature *qua* person as it relates to our well-being, explain what an individual person’s self-realization consists in, and demonstrate how this approach is able to make compelling constitution and evaluation judgments that capture the subjective intuition and our intuitions about deprivation better than competitor theories.

The second part of my dissertation, chapters two through four, is both comparative and critical. Specifically, I devote a chapter to each prominent type of theory of well-being, i.e. objective-list, hedonist, and desire-satisfaction theories, and demonstrate the ways in which my theory is superior to them, often by demonstrating how well-being as self-realization can capture their theoretical strengths, e.g. capturing the subjective intuition, while avoiding their weaknesses, e.g. not being able to capture autonomy’s importance to our well-being or offering an alienating conception of an individual’s good. I conclude in chapter five with some final considerations in favor of well-being as self-realization, e.g. demonstrating how it is theoretically preferable a close rival account which puts a premium of “happiness” and exploring some directions it might lead to in our theorizing about the nature of prudential value. Before moving on, however, it is worth taking into account some general considerations about theories of well-being.

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<sup>4</sup> Thereby avoiding courting what I call worries about “alienation.”

### *What's a Theory of Well-Being For Anyway?*

Considered at their broadest, theories of well-being provide answers to an important question: what is the nature of prudential value?<sup>5</sup> Answers to this question, i.e. theories of well-being, give an account of what it is that makes something non-instrumentally, i.e. intrinsically, good for a person.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, a comprehensive theory of well-being seeks to capture whatever it is that makes a life good for the individual living that life. *Prudential* value, which is separate from aesthetic, moral, or perfectionist value,<sup>7</sup> has traditionally been held to consist in pleasure, desire-satisfaction, or one's having certain objective goods in one's life. Respectively, this is the position held by Hedonist, Desire-Satisfaction, and Objective-List theories of well-being. By offering an account of what an individual's prudential good consists in, these accounts provide a standard from which one can make constitution and evaluation judgments about a particular individual's well-being.

### *Dividing Up Theories of Well-Being*

A popular way of dividing up the traditional tri-partite division of theories of well-being, i.e. Hedonism, Desire-Satisfaction, and Objective-List theories, is by classifying them as "subjective" or "objective." As with many philosophical

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that our lives are the sort of complex things that can be evaluated among several dimensions. Well-Being/welfare assessments concern what one could call the "prudential value of a life" which is how well that life is going for the individual whose life it is (Sumner, 1996: 20). I follow several others, notably "subjectivist" theories of well-being, in holding that such "subject-relativity" is an essential aspect of well-being.

<sup>6</sup> In what follows I treat "theories of well-being," "theories of welfare," and "theories of prudential value" synonymously.

<sup>7</sup> Aesthetic value concerns the domain of feeling or sensibility, and a life could gain aesthetic value when, for example, it manifests aesthetic sensibility. The mere fact, however, that one's life possesses such value says nothing about the quality of that life for the person living it. Perfectionist value is the value that something has insofar as it is a good instance or specimen of its kind, or if exemplifies the excellences characteristic of its particular nature. However, no matter what we count as the excellences for a creature, their perfection has no necessary payoff for an individual. Finally, when it comes to ethical or moral value, and when one understands the "moral" as that which concerns those practical considerations which have to do with the impact of our choices on the lives of others, ethical value can sometimes run counter to prudential value, e.g. instances of "self-sacrifice" or "duty" are often morally valuable and prudentially costly.



taxonomies, there are several ways of understanding these categories.<sup>8</sup> In light of this, in what follows I will be abstracting away from any particular understanding of these categories. On my view a theory of well-being is subjective if and only if it treats an individual's having a positive orientation (e.g. desire, attitude, etc.)<sup>9</sup> toward something as both a necessary and sufficient condition of that thing's contributing to that individual's well-being. For instance, desire-satisfaction theorists claim that an individual's having a desire of his satisfied is *in and of itself* both necessary and sufficient to positively contribute to his well-being.<sup>10</sup> Objective theories either deny this sufficiency, arguing that an individual's having a positive orientation toward a putative objective good is merely a *necessary* condition of that individual's being benefited by that good because objective goods are comprised, at least in part, by a particular positive orientation,<sup>11</sup> or they deny both this sufficiency *and* necessity by maintaining that something can be (directly or immediately) good for one even if one does not regard it favorably or is not positively oriented toward it.<sup>12</sup> According to this taxonomy objective-list theories are objective while well-being as self-realization, desire-satisfaction, and hedonist theories are subjective.

One of the advantages of dividing theories of well-being into those that are subjective and those that are objective is that each approach seems particularly well-suited to address a major intuition about well-being. Subjective theories of well-being are well-suited to capture the subjective intuition and avoid worries of "alienation." Again, the alienation intuition is the idea that we are reluctant to insist that something

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example: Sumner, L.W, 1996 and Griffin, J. 1986.

<sup>9</sup> This orientation can be either actual or 'hypothetical' in that it might be suitably idealized, e.g. rational, informed, vivid, etc.

<sup>10</sup> This is, of course, a very *broad* description of a desire-satisfaction theory of well-being.

<sup>11</sup> Guy Fletcher offers such a view in his "A Fresh Start for the Objective-List Theory of Well-Being," *Utilitas* Vol. 25, No. 2. June: 2013.

<sup>12</sup> This, for example, is the view advocated for by Arneson, R. in "Human Flourishing versus Desire Satisfaction," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16 No.9. 1999.

is good for someone if that individual would not, even upon reflection, agree with that assessment and is thus resiliently *alienated* from that claim about what is good for him. Subjective theories that attempt to capture this intuition are perhaps best typified by desire-satisfaction theories of well-being. As one will see in chapter four, most contemporary desire-satisfaction theories are various forms of *informed* desire-satisfaction accounts. These accounts can be traced, in modern times, to Richard Brandt's view in *A Theory of the Good in the Right*<sup>13</sup> which held that an individual's good consists in the satisfaction of those desires that individual would have after "relevant information [about that individual's pre-existing desires] registered fully...if the person's repeatedly represented to themselves, in an ideally vivid way, and at an appropriate time, the available information which is relevant in the sense that it would make a difference to desires and aversions if they thought of it."<sup>14</sup> Contemporary informed desire-satisfaction theories are differentiated by the "idealization" conditions they stipulate in order to distinguish those desires that contribute to an individual's well-being from those which do not.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of their particular details, the intuition driving desire-satisfaction theories is the idea that what is good for an individual depends upon what that particular individual is like and that an individual's desires, which typically relate to that individual's aims and goals, seem particularly well-suited to capture those things which matter most to the quality of his life. Otherwise put, we have the intuition that an individual's good<sup>16</sup> must be "made for," "suited to," or "resonate with" him such that there is a "fit" between him and his

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<sup>13</sup> Brandt, R. *A Theory of the Good and the Right* (Oxford: 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Brandt, 1979. p. 11

<sup>15</sup> Authors who discuss the importance of 'idealization' conditions include: Griffin, J., *Well-being*, (1986); Railton, P. 'Facts and Values,' *Philosophical Topics* 14 (1986); Gauthier, D. *Morals by Agreement*, (Oxford: 1986); Griffin, J., *Well-Being* (1986); and Kagan, S., *The Limits of Morality* (1989).

<sup>16</sup> I.e. what is 'good for' that individual. Henceforth I use these two terms, i.e. "an individual's good" and what is "good for an individual" synonymously.

good and that something can only be “made for,” “suited to,” or “resonate with” an individual if, for instance, a concern for that thing lies within that individual’s motivational capacity, e.g. if it is something that individual either does desire or would desire under suitably ideal conditions.<sup>17</sup> By defining and evaluating the constituents of an individual’s well-being solely by reference to that individual’s idiosyncratic make-up, subjective theories of well-being, like desire-satisfaction accounts, seem well-suited to explain why it is typically thought that what is good for an individual depends on what that individual is like.

While subjective theories promise to capture our intuitions about alienation, they run into problems when it comes to another central set of intuitions we have about well-being – our intuitions about *deprivation*. Again, we think that in some cases an individual is worse off because he is deprived of some essential or basic human good(s) and we persist in thinking he is worse off because of this deprivation even if he cannot be brought to appreciate that fact. Objective theories of well-being seem well-suited to explain what it means for an individual to lead a “full life,”<sup>18</sup> i.e. *flourishing* life, and, correspondingly, why it is unfortunate when an individual faces a *deprivation* by lacking any of the goods contained within such a life. Take, for instance, Thomas Hurka’s objective-list theory of well-being in his *The Best Things in Life*.<sup>19</sup> According to Hurka, “the best things in life,” i.e. those things that contribute to an individual well-being, are pleasure, knowledge, achievement, virtue, and friendship. Other objective theories of well-being, e.g. Aristotelian Eudaimonist approaches, provide a substantive account of what the well-being of a particular class, e.g. a species, consists in, thereby having a standard against which they can make

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<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, what is good for an individual must connect with what she would find “in some degree compelling or attractive, at least if [she] were rational and aware.” See: Rosati, C. ‘Internalism and the Good for a Person,’ *Ethics* 106 (1996): pp. 298-299 see also: Railton, “Facts and Values” (1986).

<sup>18</sup> That is, one replete with the goods that, for example, humans typically enjoy.

<sup>19</sup> Hurka, T. *The Best Things in Life* (Oxford: 2011).

judgments concerning whether some particular member of that class is either flourishing or deprived of some good, or goods, characteristic of that class. Accordingly, the primary idea driving our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation is that one can only know what is good for an individual, or evaluate an individual's level of well-being, if one knows what *kind* of thing that individual is, i.e. what class it belongs to, and what the well-being of the members of that kind consists in.

While many theories of well-being are able to capture some of our central intuitions about well-being, e.g. capturing the subjective intuition and avoiding alienation worries, they do so at the cost of not being able to capture others, e.g. explaining deprivation and flourishing. For example, while desire-satisfaction and hedonist theories appear well-suited to avoid worries about alienation, they are poorly equipped to explain our intuitions concerning deprivation. A classic example which demonstrates this is Rawls' "grass counter": a brilliant Harvard mathematician who is fully rational and informed about his options in life and yet who has an overriding desire to count the blades of grass on Harvard's lawns.<sup>20</sup> Intuitively we think that in sitting around all day counting blades of grass, this individual is deprived of some important goods in life: friendship, meaningful achievement, etc. If, however, the mathematician's desire(s) are fully rational and informed, then according to subjective theories like informed desire-satisfaction accounts, counting blades of grass really is what is best for him in life. Relatedly, insofar as counting blades of grass is what provides the mathematician with the most pleasure then hedonist theories are likewise committed to his having a great life. To the extent that subjective theories offer counter-intuitive verdicts like these, they cannot explain our intuitions about deprivation.

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<sup>20</sup> Rawls, J. A Theory of Justice (2009) p. 432-3.

Conversely, objective theories appear well-equipped to explain our intuitions concerning flourishing and deprivation, yet do so at the cost of raising worries about alienation and failing to capture the subjective intuition. Consider, for example, Hurka's positing "knowledge" as an objective good.<sup>21</sup> Hurka holds that knowledge involves one's believing something which is true and that this is prudentially valuable for one because it gives one a tie to reality. Further, he holds that the wider ranging and more explanatorily fruitful the knowledge one has is, the better off one is. Counterexamples to this claim are, however, easily imaginable. Consider the following case:

*Car Mechanics and Particle Physics:* Imagine two things: Bob, a car mechanic who enjoys the simpler things in life (good food, friends, etc.), and a particular piece of wide-ranging and explanatorily fruitful knowledge, the confirmation of the existence of the Higgs Boson particle. Delving into a bit of speculative science fiction, imagine that Bob could have a computer chip implanted in his brain that would give him all of the knowledge surrounding the discovery of this particle and its relationship to fundamental issues in particle physics.

One can easily imagine that Bob could rationally refuse the implementation of this chip on the grounds that the knowledge it would impart to him would be useless; that is, it would not contribute positively to the quality of his life, i.e. his well-being. If one agrees with Bob's assessment of his life, then an important upshot of this is that to the extent that objective theories, like Hurka's, hold that particular instances of some good, e.g. knowledge, is good for a person regardless of what he or she is like, they offer a conception of an individual's goods which is entirely insensitive to that individual's idiosyncratic makeup. In doing this they offer a conception of an individual's good that that individual might be alienated from and which may not capture the subjective intuition.

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<sup>21</sup> This criticism of Hurka's approach, and those objective theories like his, is inspired by some of Richard Kraut's comments in his review of Hurka's book. See: Kraut, R (2011, January 25). The Best Things in Life: A Guide to What Really Matters [Review of the book *The Best Things in Life: A Guide to What Really Matters*] Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews.

In light of the preceding considerations one might wonder whether it is possible for a theory of well-being to completely cohere with both intuitions, i.e. the subjective intuition and our intuitions about deprivation and flourishing. I believe that the answer is 'no'. As I will explain in detail in what follows, I hold that there are two incommensurable standards underlying these intuitions<sup>22</sup> and that we should therefore develop a theory that allows for and explains this deep conflict. Put otherwise, I think that philosophers must come to terms with the tension that exists between the two intuitions and work to develop a theory that best accommodates them both at the same time. My theory, well-being as self-realization, is designed to do just this.

My theory is best understood as a subjective-objective hybrid. The core idea of the theory is that a person is faring well to the extent that he is achieving self-realization. Of course the talk of self-realization is notoriously opaque, so I offer a more specific account. In rough outline, I hold that a person's self-realization is a matter of his exercising the cognitive and volitional capacities that are characteristic of *persons*. More specifically, I focus on the idea that self-realization requires that an agent act on his autonomous values, where autonomy is understood in a relatively deflated, relational way. As I will explain in the first chapter, I follow various feminist thinkers by thinking of autonomy as a disposition for answerability, not a strong, individualistic form of rational self-governance.

With this very rough characterization in mind, let me explain how my theory is designed to respect both the alienation and deprivation intuitions. The possession and exercise of the capacities that I maintain are constitutive of autonomy play an important role in a person's determining and shaping the constituents of his well-

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<sup>22</sup> I.e. the standard set by either an individual's idiosyncratic makeup or the characteristics of a particular class to which an individual belongs (e.g. what its members flourishing consists in).

being.<sup>23</sup> This allows well-being as self-realization to capture the subjective intuition and avoid worries about alienation, something objective theories struggle with. My view differs from more traditional objective theories, e.g. Aristotelian approaches, in that while I concede that one can consider our well-being as consisting in human flourishing, and that appeals to this standard allows one to make certain compelling judgments about an individual's flourishing and deprivation, one ought to, for the majority of our concerns about our well-being,<sup>24</sup> consider our well-being *qua* person because this focus allows one to accommodate our intuitions about the subjective intuition, alienation, and deprivation better than species-based objective theories, desire-satisfaction, and hedonist theories of well-being.

### *Finding the Right Standard*

Judgments about an individual's well-being are always made against some sort of standard. This might be an objective-list, the set of an individual's desires, or whether or not an individual is experiencing a greater balance of pleasure over pain. By providing an account of what an individual's well-being consists in, a theory of well-being provides one with the conceptual apparatus needed in order to judge, for example, whether some putative good would contribute to an individual's well-being. That is, this account serves as a standard against which this judgment can be made. In what follows I examine how well three different standards perform in providing us with intuitively appealing considered judgments about individuals' well-being: the standard set by an individual's idiosyncratic makeup,<sup>25</sup> or the standard set by some class to which one belongs: either one's makeup *qua* human or *qua* person.

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<sup>23</sup> Ultimately then, persons, as autonomous agents, are the sorts of beings whose good is defined and achieved through autonomous activity.

<sup>24</sup> In the last chapter I explore the idea that there might be disunity among our prudential concerns such that some are best captured by an appeal to our nature *qua* person while others are best captured with an appeal to the standard set by our nature *qua* person.

<sup>25</sup> I.e. the set of his desires, what gives him pleasure, etc.

I believe that the best way to offer intuitively appealing judgments about our well-being is to recognize that despite the fact that there are *several* standards against which one can make judgments about our well-being, *overall* one can make the most compelling judgments by appealing to the standard set by our nature *qua* person, a class whose members are characterized by their evaluative makeup, i.e. what they value. Recognizing that our prudential concerns are not univocal, and that the majority of our prudential concerns relate our nature *qua* person, allows my person-centered theory to both make more intuitively appealing normative judgments about well-being than many predominant theories of well-being and meets more important conditions of theoretical adequacy than these competitor theories. When it comes to those judgments which are best made against the standard set by our nature *qua* human I am happy to defer to those species-centered objective theories which offer substantive accounts of our well-being *qua* human.

As we will see, it is not appreciating the fact that certain judgments are best made against the standard set by an individual's idiosyncratic makeup while others are best made against the standard set by some class to which an individual is a member, that lies behind many theories being only able to capture one set of intuitions but not the other. These judgments include: what an individual's well-being consists in,<sup>26</sup> what an individual's relationship toward something must be in order for it to contribute to that individual's well-being,<sup>27</sup> how well an individual is faring,<sup>28</sup> and whether our being autonomous is important to our well-being. Recognizing that these judgments are often made against distinct standards motivates and underlies much of this dissertation. More broadly, I believe that the concerns that motivate our

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<sup>26</sup> I.e. what its constituents are.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. whether the subjective intuition or an "endorsement constraint" is appropriate when it comes to the nature of prudential value.

<sup>28</sup> I.e. what an individual's level of well-being is.



investigations into the nature of our well-being, and the compelling normative judgments we want to make about particular individuals' well-being, are not univocal. This is manifested, for example, by the fact that the intuitions that drive us toward endorsing the subjective intuition or the desire to avoid worries about alienation incline us toward subjective theories, while worries about deprivation and the desire to explain and justify our intuitions about flourishing drive us toward objective theories. I feel the pull of both sets of intuitions and, again, believe that one can capture both of them to the greatest extent possible by focusing on our nature *qua* person. *Persons*, as I understand them, are a class whose members are characterized by their possessing certain capacities (specifically the capacities constitutive of autonomy)<sup>29</sup> that give them wide latitude in defining and shaping their idiosyncratic makeup, which in turn determines what is and what is not a constituent of their well-being.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, by focusing on persons I offer an objective (class-centered) theory of well-being. As I will show, other objective theories which make judgments about individuals' well-being by reference to their species-membership would avoid several theoretical pitfalls<sup>31</sup> were they to make such judgments against the standard set by our nature *qua* person.

Ultimately I offer a new way for us to think about the nature of our well-being. This is motivated in large part by my belief that many of our most fundamental prudential concerns are captured by considering our well-being *qua* person and understanding "persons" as a class whose members are characterized by their possessing certain cognitive and volitional capacities includes those capacities

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<sup>29</sup> E.g. self-consciousness, rationality, reflection, imagination, etc.

<sup>30</sup> In addition, I also believe that these capacities give an individual the ability to alter his relationship to some good that is characteristic of some class to which he belongs (e.g. his species). This allows my theory to avoid some worries about alienation and to capture the subjective intuition. See section: 2.4.0.

<sup>31</sup> Such pitfalls include, for example, offering an alienating conception of an individual's good and having trouble capturing autonomy's centrality to our well-being.

constitutive of autonomy. The exercise of these capacities allows one to have a great deal of latitude in shaping and defining the constituents of one's identity,<sup>32</sup> and consequently, one's well-being. Accordingly, an individual's identity *qua* person is defined (at least in part) by that individual's evaluative perspective.<sup>33</sup> By appealing to an individual's evaluative makeup when defining what is good for that individual, well-being as self-realization is able to capture the subjective intuition, avoid offering an alienating conception of an individual's good, and capture important nuances in our experiences of putative deprivations.

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<sup>32</sup> I.e. one's idiosyncratic makeup.

<sup>33</sup> It is only "in part" because an individual's evaluative perspective may not (is likely to not) encompass or entirely capture an individual complete evaluative makeup. That is, an individual may value something without ever having necessarily reflected upon and explicitly endorsed it or a person's experiencing emotional or psychic pain or stress may prevent that individual, for a time at least, from having an explicit pro-attitude toward something which that individual values. I explore the nature of such valuation through this dissertation.

# Chapter One: What We Want Out of a Theory of Well-Being

“Meaning and morality of one's life come from within oneself. Healthy, strong individuals seek self-expansion by experimenting and by living dangerously. Life consists of an infinite number of possibilities and the healthy person explores as many of them as possible...The good life is ever changing, challenging, devoid of regret, intense, creative and risky.”  
- Friedrich Nietzsche

## 1.1 Some Important Conditions of Adequacy for a Theory of Well-Being

Comprehensive theories of well-being ought to meet two general conditions of theoretical adequacy: they ought to be normatively and descriptively adequate. More specifically, if an account of our well-being ends up positing as prudentially valuable things that we have no reason to care about, then it is not normatively adequate. If it implies that our well-being is such that it cannot be investigated, measured, or achieved, then it lacks descriptive adequacy.<sup>34</sup> Since I aim to formulate a novel normatively adequate theory of well-being, my focus will be those conditions that a theory must meet in order to be normatively adequate. A theory's being normatively adequate is important because it helps to ensure that the theory has *normative authority*; that is, it ensures that individuals to whom the theory applies have reason to follow its dictates.

A normatively authoritative theory of well-being will be one whose imperatives and judgments individuals have reason to follow, care about, etc. More specifically, ideally an individual's good, i.e. what is good for that individual, will provide that individual with two sorts of reasons for action: motivating and justifying

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<sup>34</sup> Two philosophers who give particularly descriptively compelling accounts of well-being is Valerie Tiberius. See, for example, Tiberius, V. (2010). *The Reflective Life: Living Wisely With Our Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, as well as Haybron, D. M. (2010). *The Pursuit of Unhappiness: The Elusive Psychology of Well-Being*. New York: Oxford University Press.

reasons.<sup>35</sup> These reasons will ensure two things. First, it will ensure that individuals (i.e. everyone to whom the theory is supposed to apply) will have some motivation to care about what the theory recommends. Second, it will provide one with standards of justification (i.e. correctness or appropriateness) for these recommendations. Put broadly then, a normatively authoritative theory of well-being will be action guiding (in one way or another). That being said, an individual may be motivated by all kinds of considerations and left cold by others. Accordingly, I maintain that the sorts of motivating reasons that a normatively adequate and authoritative theory of well-being ought to provide a person relate to his identity *qua* person, i.e. what I call “his values.” A corollary of this is that an individual’s being left resiliently cold (*alienated*) by something, i.e. resiliently without any pro-attitude or positive orientation toward it, (roughly) guides the extension of what is good or bad for that individual if and only if it reflects facts about the (autonomous) value-based reasons that individual has.

I believe that if a theory of well-being is unable to capture the subjective intuition,<sup>36</sup> then it then it fails to be normatively adequate in the first way, i.e. it fails to provide people with reason or motivation to care about what it recommends. Relatedly, the viability of this account, i.e. this conception of individuals’ good, will determine how compelling the standards of justification are for these recommendations. Ultimately, a theory of well-being’s capturing the subjective intuition is more important to its possessing normative authority than its being able to entirely explain or support our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation. This is because a theory’s capturing the subjective intuition helps to ensure that both the conception of well-being it offers will not be alien to the individuals to whom the theory applies and that it

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<sup>35</sup> That is, what is good for an individual will be motivationally efficacious in \*some\* way or another and there are standards against which prudential judgments can be made, justified, etc.

<sup>36</sup> And thereby offers a conception of an individual’s good which that individual is alienated from.

provides these individuals with prudential reasons for action.<sup>37</sup> That being said, a theory of well-being will lack explanatory power if it cannot explain and justify some of our intuitions concerning flourishing and deprivation. Considering the centrality of these two sets of intuitions it is worth looking at both more closely.

### *1.1.1 The Subjective Intuition*

Because subjective theories of well-being focus upon an individual's idiosyncratic makeup (e.g. what that individual desires, values, gets pleasure out of, etc.) they are putatively well-equipped to capture the subjective intuition. Put at its broadest the subjective intuition is the idea that "what is good for an individual depends upon what that individual is like." Throughout the literature on well-being there have been various ways of formulating this idea. As I mentioned in the introduction, many subjective theories maintain that an individual has evaluative authority, or is "sovereign" over, his good such that what is good for him is determined entirely by his evaluative perspective. One can understand an individual's "evaluative perspective" as concerning what that individual has "pro" or "con" attitudes toward.<sup>38</sup> Some theorists eschew a direct appeal to an individual's explicit endorsements or rejections and instead endorse a "resonance" constraint on prudential value, i.e. the view that in order for something to intrinsically enhance a person's well-being, that person must be capable of caring about that thing (in one way or another).<sup>39</sup> This understanding of the subjective intuition is close to my own view and it allows one to capture what I believe to be an important condition of adequacy on a theory of well-

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<sup>37</sup> Ideally then, it will help to ensure that an individual's good will be motivationally efficacious for that individual.

<sup>38</sup> Depending upon the theory, these can be actual or hypothetical and can take many forms (desire, endorsement, etc.).

<sup>39</sup> Some describes this as "internalism" about prudential value.

being: that it ought to “make your well-being depend on your own concerns: the things you care about, attach importance to, regard as mattering, and so on.”<sup>40</sup>

In addition to maintaining that a normatively adequate theory of well-being ought to capture the subjective intuition, I believe the converse as well: that what is good for an individual ought not be alien to him; i.e. that a theory of prudential value ought not court worries about “alienation.” Railton captures this idea in his discussion of an “internalist constraint” on prudential value:

Is it true that all normative judgments must find an internal resonance in those to whom they are applied? While I do not find this thesis convincing as a claim about all species of normative assessment, it does seem to me to capture an important feature of the concept of intrinsic value to say that what is intrinsically valuable for a person must have a connection with what he would find in some degree compelling or attractive, at least if he were rational and aware. It would be an intolerably *alienated* conception of someone's good to imagine that it might fail in any such way to engage him.<sup>41</sup>

I believe that to the extent that a theory of well-being is unable to capture the subjective intuition, it offers an alienating conception of an individual's good. Those theories of well-being which offer an alienating conception of an individual's good, say, by positing a conception of an individual's good which is *completely insensitive* to that individual's evaluative makeup, fail to provide that individual with any reason to care about or be moved or motivated by what it posits as “his good.”<sup>42</sup> That is, this failure threatens these theories' ability to ensure that the individuals to whom they apply have reason to follow their dictates, i.e. it threatens their ability to provide individuals with motivating reasons for what it (prudentially) recommends. Because such theories fail to provide individuals with compelling motivating reasons, the standards of justification they provide for these recommendations, and the justifying

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<sup>40</sup> In maintaining this I follow Sumner's view about conditions of adequacy for a theory of well-being. See Sumner, 1996: p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Railton, “Facts and Values” in *Facts, Values, and Norms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 47. My italics.

<sup>42</sup> Such an individual would likely be *resiliently* alienated from what the theory posits as his good.

reasons offered therefrom, are likewise neither normatively adequate nor authoritative. Again, this is because they offer an alienating conception of an individual's good. To be fair, one might reject internalism about prudential value, any sort of "resonance" constraint on it, or more generally the subjective intuition. While I follow many well-being theorists who find the subjective intuition to be a rather fundamental intuition in our theorizing about our well-being<sup>43</sup> and who think it is far more intuitive to be an internalist about prudential value, there is no "knock-down" (i.e. rationally inescapable) argument for why one *must* endorse such a position. That being said, while many subjective theories of well-being are putatively well-equipped to capture the subjective intuition and avoid offering an alienating conception of individuals' good,<sup>44</sup> there are important ways in which many hedonist and desire-satisfaction theories fall short of this and well-being as self-realization does not. Furthermore, well-being as self-realization is able to avoid many of the theoretical pitfalls that befall these approaches.

### *1.1.2 Deprivation and Flourishing*

The second major condition of theoretical adequacy that a theory of well-being ought to meet is possessing the ability to explain and justify our judgments concerning "flourishing" and "deprivation" and capture nuances therein. Objective theories seem well-suited to explain and justify our judgments concerning whether an individual is leading a "full" (i.e. *flourishing*) life, e.g. one replete with the goods that, say, humans typically enjoy, and, correspondingly, why it is unfortunate when an

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<sup>43</sup> To name a few: Fletcher, G. (2013). A Fresh Start for the Objective-List Theory of Well-Being. *Utilitas*, 25(2), 206–220; Rosati, C. S. (1995). Persons, Perspectives, and Full Information Accounts of the Good. *Ethics*, 105(2), 296–325; Railton, P. (1999). Facts and Values. In *Facts, Values, and Norms* (pp. 43–68). Cambridge University Press; Sumner, L. W. (1996). *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*. Oxford University Press, USA.

<sup>44</sup> Again, they do this by making judgments about an individual's well-being by reference to the standard set by an individual's idiosyncratic makeup. Relatedly, this allows them to capture the idea that what is prudentially good for an individual depends on who that individual is like, not what any actual (or hypothetical) class or group to which that individual may belong is like.

individual experiences a *deprivation* by lacking any of the goods contained within such a life. Otherwise put, we think that in some cases an individual is prudentially worse off because he is deprived of, say, some essential or basic *human* good and we persist in thinking that this individual is worse off because of this deprivation *even if* he cannot be brought to appreciate that fact. Consequently, according to many objective theories an individual can be worse off because he is deprived of some good even if he would be resiliently alienated from that good were he to have it.

Objective theories of well-being are typically able to make compelling judgments concerning whether an individual is flourishing or deprived in virtue of the fact that they make these judgments through appeal to the standard set by a substantive account (which they typically provide) of what the flourishing (i.e. “good life”), and conversely, the deprivation, of a particular class, e.g. a species, consists in. Appeals to this sort of account provide objective theories with a standard against which they can either derive the constituents of an individual’s well-being (in order to make constitution judgments) or evaluate an individual’s well-being (i.e. make evaluative judgments) in order to judge, for example, whether some particular individual is flourishing.

Because many objective theories make judgments about an individual’s well-being through appeal to the standard set by some class to which that individual belongs, they make no reference to an individual’s idiosyncratic makeup or that individual’s orientation<sup>45</sup> toward certain putative goods. This results in their failing to capture the subjectivity that many believe is a hallmark of prudential value. This in turn often causes them to offer an account of an individual’s good from which that individual may be alienated. Accordingly, many objective theories of well-being offer

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<sup>45</sup> Including his or her mental states, idiosyncratic and evaluative makeup, and evaluative perspective.



counter-intuitive judgments about individuals' well-being that undermines their normative adequacy and authority, which in turn threatens their ability to serve as comprehensive theories of well-being.

### *1.1.3 Pulling Us In Opposite Directions*

As we have seen, while many popular subjective and objective theories of well-being are able to capture some of our central intuitions about well-being, e.g. capturing the subjective intuition and avoiding worries about alienation, they often do so at the cost of not being able to capture others, e.g. explaining flourishing and deprivation. Take, for example, a paradigmatic subjective theory of well-being: desire-satisfaction accounts. Maintaining that an individual's well-being consists in the satisfaction of that individual's desires is attractive for several reasons: desires are typically related to one's aims or goals in life, their intentionality is thought to capture the subjectivity which many think is essential to the nature of prudential value, etc. Accordingly, desire-satisfaction theories seem well suited to capture the idea that an individual's well-being depends upon what that individual is like. That being said, like most subjective theories, desire-satisfaction theories appear poorly equipped to explain our intuitions concerning flourishing and deprivation. Again, consider Rawls' grass counter, a brilliant Harvard mathematician who is fully rational and informed about his options in life and yet who has an overriding desire to count the blades of grass on Harvard's lawns.<sup>46</sup> Intuitively, we think that a life that consists in one's sitting around all day counting blades of grass lacks (i.e. is *deprived* of) important goods in life: deep personal relationships, meaningful achievement, etc. Otherwise put, a life spent counting blades of grass is not a "full" or *flourishing* human life. If, however, the mathematician's desire(s) are fully rational and informed, then according to desire-

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<sup>46</sup> Rawls, 2009: p. 432-3.

satisfaction accounts, counting blades of grass really is what is best for him in life (i.e. most prudentially valuable). What this case illustrates is that subjective theories' sole focus on an individual's idiosyncratic evaluative perspective (e.g. what that individual desires) often threatens their ability to offer compelling judgments concerning flourishing and deprivation. In contrast, objective theories (putatively) have the resources at their disposal, e.g. a substantive account of "the good human life," which allows them to explain why the grass counting mathematician is deprived of certain goods that are essential to a good human life, i.e. one with a high level of well-being.

While objective theories may be well equipped to explain our intuitions concerning deprivation, they typically do so at the cost of offering an alienating conception of an individual's good (thereby failing to capture the subjective intuition). Again, consider Hurka's objective-list theory in *The Best Things in Life*. According to Hurka, "the best things in life," i.e. those things that contribute to an individual well-being are: pleasure, knowledge, achievement, virtue, and friendship. Consider his positing "knowledge." Hurka holds that an individual's possessing knowledge is prudentially valuable for him because it gives him a tie to reality and that the wider ranging and more explanatorily fruitful the knowledge one has is, the better off one's life is.<sup>47</sup> As I argued, however, when considering *Car Mechanics and Particle Physics*,<sup>48</sup> a token instance of a putative objective good does not necessarily contribute to an individual's well-being in virtue of that individual's idiosyncratic makeup, i.e. in virtue of what that individual is like (e.g. his relationship to some putative good). In light of these sort of cases, to the extent that objective theories hold that a particular token of some type of putative objective good like knowledge, aesthetic appreciation,

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<sup>47</sup> I.e. the higher one's level of well-being.

<sup>48</sup> See p. 8.

etc., is good for one regardless of what one is like<sup>49</sup> they offer a conception of an individual's good which is entirely insensitive to that individual's idiosyncratic makeup. In doing this they offer a conception of an individual's good which that individual may be resiliently alienated from, thereby failing to capture the subjective intuition. To the extent that objective theories court either of these problems they lack normative adequacy and authority because they offer a conception of an individual's well-being that that individual has no reason, and, quite possibly, *could not have any reason*, to care about, be moved by, etc.

Insofar as one thinks that a theory of well-being ought to capture the subjective intuition and avoid offering an alienating conception of an individual's good, one ought to be drawn toward a subjective theory of well-being. Conversely, insofar as one thinks that a theory of well-being ought to offer judgments that capture our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation, one ought to be inclined toward an objective theory of well-being. Accordingly, our intuitions pull us in opposite directions; i.e. they pull us toward diametrically opposed theories. This is due to subjective theories defining an individual's good entirely by reference to that individual's idiosyncratic makeup, while objective theories, which, while they may also reference these characteristics, also appeal to the characteristics of some class to which that individual belongs and what that class' good consists in. In light of how these approaches define the constituents of an individual's well-being, i.e. with appeals to subjectivity (i.e. an individual's idiosyncratic makeup) and objectivity (i.e. the facts concerning what some class' good or flourishing consists in), one might wonder whether it is possible for a theory of well-being to completely cohere with both the subjective intuition and our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation. I believe that

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<sup>49</sup> Including one's orientation or lack of orientation toward that good.

because the standards underlying (i.e. appealed to by) each intuition<sup>50</sup> are incommensurable, there is a sense in which no theory can entirely capture both intuitions. Accordingly, my view is that well-being theorists must come to terms with the tension that exists between these central intuitions and work to develop a theory that best accommodates them both at the same time. My aim in this dissertation is to do just that.

The rest of my dissertation is dedicated to the task of formulating well-being as self-realization and explaining and demonstrating how and why it is able to accommodate the subjective intuition and our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation better than more familiar subjective and objective theories of well-being which typically only respond to one set of intuitions but run afoul of the other. As I have noted, despite its focus on an individual's idiosyncratic/evaluative makeup, well-being as self-realization is an objective theory of well-being. This is due to its maintaining that the nature of our well-being depends, in part, on our *class*-membership, specifically on our nature *qua* person, a class whose members are characterized by the possession of certain cognitive and volitional capacities including, most importantly, those capacities constitutive of autonomy. Second, it maintains that a person's "self-realization" is objectively good for him regardless of his orientation toward it. That being said, the nature of an individual's "values" is such that the preceding commitments do not court worries about alienation.

I maintain that an individual's self, i.e. an individual's identity *qua* person, is defined by that individual's *values*, so that an individual's self-realization involves the realization of these values. This allows well-being as self-realization to capture the subjective intuition and avoid offering an alienating conception of an individual's

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<sup>50</sup> I.e. the standard set by either an individual's idiosyncratic makeup or the characteristics of a particular class to which that individual belongs.

good because of its focus on both persons' evaluative makeups and their capacity for autonomy, exercises of which define and shape the constituents of a person's identity including the constituents of his well-being, i.e. his values. Relatedly, my focus on our nature *qua* person allows my theory to capture some important nuances in our experience of certain putative deprivations because persons can play an active role in altering their relationship to certain putative goods. My view differs from more traditional (typically Aristotelian) objective theories of well-beings, in that while I concede that some of our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation can be compellingly captured by an appeal to our nature *qua* human,<sup>51</sup> I maintain that one ought to, for the vast majority of our prudential concerns, consider our well-being *qua* person because this focus allows one to capture *both* the subjective intuition and important nuances in persons' experiences of various deprivations better than species-based objective theories. Ultimately then, there will be cases in which considering an individual's well-being *qua* person and *qua* human will deliver different verdicts. It is my view that in most of these cases well-being as self-realization's focus on our nature *qua* person offers more compelling judgments than species-based objective theories.

## 1.2 Why Persons and Not Humans?

Before getting to the details of well-being as self-realization, it is worth preemptively addressing what I imagine to be an immediate objection a species-based objective theorist might make to my approach. Put succinctly, they might argue that an appeal to our nature *qua* person is otiose. That is, they could assert that one can capture everything that my appeal to "persons" does by considering our well-being *qua* "member of the human species" and stipulating that the members of the class

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<sup>51</sup> I.e. with an appeal to the characteristic "good life" for the members of the class "humans."

“humanity” are likewise characterized by the possession of certain capacities, namely those capacities constitutive of autonomy. Accordingly, they could reject my appeal to the class “persons” as being unnecessary, as is the theory of well-being I build up from it, and argue that the only standard that one needs in order to make compelling normative judgments about our well-being is the standard set by the class “humanity.”

There are, however, several good reasons for thinking that our nature *qua* person cannot simply be incorporated into our nature *qua* member of the human species. An initial, and relatively straightforward, reason why one ought to regard our nature *qua* member of the human species and *qua* person as being distinct is categorical: “persons” is a *psychological* category,<sup>52</sup> while “humanity” is a *biological* one. That is, designating an individual as a “human being” is a purely descriptive classification (specifically a genetic one). It tells us nothing about the entity other than it is a living organism that possesses human DNA. In contrast, it is characteristic of persons that they have both a certain level of psychological complexity and a will that is structured in a certain way. More specifically, persons can stand in a particular relationship to the various psychological phenomena that occur in them: they can be autonomous in relation to them. Accordingly, what is properly attributed to an individual *qua* person are those aspects of his idiosyncratic makeup that he is autonomous in relation to, what I call his “values.” Appreciating this is important because many of the central normative judgments, e.g. constitution judgments, that we want to make about individuals’ well-being concerns their values, projects, etc., that is, central (and defining) features of their will, i.e. their identities *qua* person. Consider, for example, Frankfurt’s classic example of the “unwilling addict.”<sup>53</sup> Because the unwilling addict wishes he were rid of the (first-order) desire to take his drug of

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<sup>52</sup> As well as (I believe) a normative one.

<sup>53</sup> Frankfurt, H. G. (1971). Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68(1), p. 5.

choice,<sup>54</sup> i.e. he “rejects” it and considers it as being *alien* to him, he is not autonomous in relation to it, i.e. it is not one of his “values,” something which is properly attributable to him *qua* person. Accordingly, the satisfaction of this desire does *not* realize one of his values, i.e. it is not a token instance of his “self-realization,” so its realization does not contribute to his well-being *qua* person. This is but one way in which autonomous persons shape their idiosyncratic makeup that in turn determines the constituents of their well-being.

Another major reason why a theory of well-being ought to consider our nature *qua* human and *qua* person as providing distinct standards of evaluation for prudential judgments is because these classes are not extensionally equivalent. This is because “humans” and “persons” have different persistence conditions. Consider, for instance, the fact that while we may be human beings throughout our entire existence<sup>55</sup> (in virtue of our DNA), we are only persons for part of that existence, i.e. during that part of our existence in which we have the cognitive and volitional capacities constitutive of personhood. More concretely, there are humans who are not persons, e.g. the very young, those who are suffering from certain cognitive and volitional defects, and individuals who are in persistent vegetative states. Conversely, one can, with a slight stretching of one’s imagination, conceive of persons who are not human, take, for example, one’s favorite science fiction story involving sentient aliens or machines. Because the classes “persons” and “humans” haven different characteristics and constitutive properties, they have different persistence conditions and, consequently, are not extensionally equivalent. An important implication of this is that our nature *qua* human and *qua* person are distinct - so much so, I will argue, that what is good

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<sup>54</sup> Specifically he has a second-order desire that is in conflict with a first-order desire.

<sup>55</sup> I.e. from the moment of our conception until our death.

for an individual *qua* member of the human species has no necessary relationship to what is good for that individual *qua* person and vice versa.

### 1.2.1 A Distinction with a Long Lineage

Distinguishing “persons” from “members of the human species” on the grounds that the former is a psychological/volitional categorization while the latter is a scientific/genetic/descriptive one has a rich philosophical lineage. Traditionally, the concept “person” has referred to any entity that has a mental life that has a certain degree of complexity and sophistication. For example, in Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* he describes “persons” as those entities that are characterized by their possession of self-consciousness. Accordingly, it is self-consciousness that differentiates persons from humans (or as Locke puts it “man”). Locke, in book two chapter XXVII of his *Essay*, distinguishes between the human and persons in the following way:

It being one thing to be the same *substance*, another the same *man*, and a third the same *person*, if *person*, *man*, and *substance*, are three names standing for three different ideas; - for such as is the idea belonging to that man, such must be the identity; which if it had been a little more carefully attended to would possibly have prevented a great deal of confusion which often occurs about this matter, with no small seeming difficulties, especially concerning *personal* identity.<sup>56</sup>

Locke considered that which is essential to one’s being a “person,” e.g. self-consciousness, as distinct from that which is essential to one’s being a man (that is, human).<sup>57</sup> Self-consciousness is also what Locke believed made an individual the same person over time.<sup>58</sup>

But though the same immaterial substance or soul does not alone, whatever it by, and in whatsoever state, make the same *man*; yet it is plain, consciousness, as far as ever it can be extended - should it be to

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<sup>56</sup> Locke, J. (1828). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. J.F. Dove. p. 229.

<sup>57</sup> One could also consider the “great deal of confusion” Locke references concerning the nature of personal identity as being somewhat analogous to my current project of disambiguating the concerns we have about our well-being *qua* person and *qua* human.

<sup>58</sup> That is, self-consciousness is constitutive of personhood and is central to personal identity in that sameness of consciousness over time is what personal identity consists in.



ages past - unites existences and actions very remote in time to the same *person*, as well as it does the existences and actions of the immediately preceding moment: so that whatever has the consciousness of present and past actions, is the same person to whom they both belong.<sup>59</sup>

Here one can see the historical roots of my claim that members of the human species (what Locke calls “man”) have different persistence conditions than persons.<sup>60</sup> On the one hand, Locke considered the concept “man” to pick out that substance which included participation in the same life by constantly changing particles of matter; i.e. one persists as the same (hu)man in virtue of *physical* continuity. On the other hand, the continued identity of a person is *independent of particles of matter, organized or unorganized* and involves only a conception of the self-conscious being or person as the same *as far back as memory extends*. This psychological continuity need not imply that there is also the continuation of the same matter or other substance. Finally, Locke considered the concept “person” to be a “forensic” term, i.e. a normative term bound up with certain normative standards. As such, it is persons, and not merely “humans,”<sup>61</sup> that are the bearers of certain rights and responsibilities and the focus on our normative concerns, including, I would argue, being the proper subject of a normatively adequate and authoritative theory of well-being. That is, Locke considered the concept person, and its constitutive element of self-consciousness, to be *irreducibly normative* in that “in this [consciousness] personal identity is founded all the right and justice of reward and punishment; happiness and misery being that for which everyone is concerned for *himself*, and not mattering what becomes of any *substance*, not joined to, or affected with that consciousness.”<sup>62</sup> This idea, that the concept “person” is irreducibly normative, is important because it is an initial consideration in favor of “persons” and not “humans” being the appropriate

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<sup>59</sup> My italics. (Locke, 1828: p. 224).

<sup>60</sup> In virtue of their differing constitutive properties.

<sup>61</sup> I.e. the mere substance constituting the animal we are.

<sup>62</sup> Locke, 1828; p. 225.

focus of a normative theory of well-being. As we will see in the next chapter, a theory of well-being must do some significant philosophical legwork in order to motivate the claim that an individual's nature *qua* human is normative, especially considering the fact that such approaches court serious worries about offering an alienating conception of an individual's good.

I have no interest in subscribing to or debating Locke's views on the metaphysical nature of the various "substances" of which we are composed. I cite Locke to demonstrate that the distinction that I draw between our identity *qua* person and *qua* member of the human species is one with a rich historical lineage. For example, in addition to Locke, T.H. Green, in his *Prolegomena to Ethics*<sup>63</sup> offers a conception of personhood according to which what is essential to personhood is the possession of certain deliberative capacities the most fundamental of which is self-consciousness. Green held that self-consciousness consisted in one's possessing the ability to both represent the different mental phenomena that occur in one as part of a single psychological system and to be able to recognize oneself as extended in time and endowed with certain deliberative capacities. These deliberative capacities include the ability to distinguish between the intensity and authority of one's desires along with the ability to regulate one's appetites, emotions and actions in accordance with those deliberations. This, however, is just another way of describing one's capacity for, and exercise of, self-governance, i.e. autonomy.

For the preceding reasons, and more to follow, one ought to consider our nature *qua* human and *qua* person as providing different standards against which

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<sup>63</sup> Green, T. H., ed. Brink, D. O. (2004). *Prolegomena to Ethics*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press. Green defended a conception of well-being that made the content of an individual's good consist in the exercise of the very same capacities that make one a rational agent in the first place. This, he believed, promised to explain why a rational agent should care about the good conceived in terms of self-realization. In this way Green believed that a theory that understands well-being as consisting in self-realization would have normative authority.

judgments about our well-being can be made. Furthermore, these standards will *not* always deliver the same verdicts. Considering my earlier argument that the classes “persons” and “members of the humans species” are not extensionally equivalent, this is not a surprising result. Leaving this issue aside, I want to focus specifically on our nature *qua* person and the nature of our well-being *qua* person.

### 1.3 Autonomy and Well-Being as Self-Realization

Well-being as self-realization maintains that in virtue of their possessing a capacity for autonomy, persons play an important role in in defining their identity, including the constituents of their well-being, i.e. their values. It is not, however, a given how one ought to understand the nature of personal autonomy. Autonomy understood at its broadest is essentially the idea of “self-governance.” That is, an individual who is autonomous is one whose actions, for example, are directed by those desires, beliefs, values, etc., that he wants them to be. This conception of autonomy has two components: the independence of one’s commitments, choices, and deliberations from manipulation by others<sup>64</sup> and the capacity to rule or govern oneself. Applied to well-being a self-realization: an individual is autonomous when he is in a position to form and act from values that are in some sense “his own.” An individual’s being in such a position requires that he meet two sorts of conditions: *competency* and *authenticity* conditions. Competency conditions include various capacities for rational thought, self-control, and freedom from debilitating pathologies, systematic self-deception, and so on. Authenticity conditions are those conditions which allow an individual to endorse, identify with, or be moved by whatever desires, impulses, etc., he *freely* wants to; i.e. there is an absence of manipulation, coercion, *deep* deference,<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> It is important to note that an individual’s being influenced by others is not the same as his being manipulated by them. The latter is far more likely to undermine and individual’s autonomy than the former.

<sup>65</sup> By “deep deference” I mean deference that does not have any basis that is not itself deferential.

etc. One of the more prominent models of personal autonomy requires second-order identification with first-order desires. This is the view that one finds in Frankfurt, the view that one's second-order desires must have the structure of a volition: one wants one's first-order desire(s) to issue in action.<sup>66</sup> This, according to Frankfurt, is what it is for a person to "identify" with that desire, value, etc. Considering that an individual's being autonomous in relation to an aspect of his idiosyncratic makeup is, I maintain, essential to its being part of his identity *qua* person, i.e. it's being one of his "values," it is important to recognize that there are several ways of understanding the nature of autonomy and identification.

To begin with, one could identify with an aspect of oneself in the sense that one simply recognizes or acknowledges its existence. This, however, does not seem to capture the sense of "autonomous identification" that I am interested in. After all, one could easily acknowledge as "part of oneself" (in the gross and literal sense that it takes place in one's body) any manner of addictive, constricting, manipulatively imposed, or otherwise putatively non-autonomous aspects of one's self. In contrast, one could maintain, as I do, that identification involves a positive orientation, e.g. an "approval," "welcoming," or "endorsement," or "*valuing*," of one sort or another. This model of autonomous identification emphasizes *procedural* independence, i.e. something is properly identifiable or attributable to one because one stands in an certain autonomous relation to it, i.e. it is not the result of manipulation by outside sources. Procedural accounts of autonomy are, by design, neutral with respect to the content of an autonomous agent's desires, preferences, and values, imposing *formal* rather than *substantive* constraints on autonomous choice, action, and identification. This is in contrast to substantive accounts of autonomy that put substantive constraints

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<sup>66</sup> Further, Frankfurt maintained that such identification must be "wholehearted" for the resulting action to count as free (autonomous) and for one to be properly identified with it *qua* person.

on an individual's desire, preference, and value, e.g. by maintaining that one simply cannot autonomously endorse certain values, actions, etc.<sup>67</sup> As we will see, these accounts are problematic because they *in principle* rule certain values as not autonomous so that to the extent that one thinks that such values are not necessarily autonomy undermining and that their realization can contribute to individuals' well-being, one's putting a substantive account of autonomy at the heart of a theory of well-being, like well-being as self-realization, raises worries about alienation. In contrast, by stipulating only formal constraint on autonomy identification, procedural accounts appear (at least initially) to avoid such worries.

Even though I maintain that well-being as self-realization ought to rely upon a procedural account of autonomy, it is worth noting that procedural accounts of autonomy have been criticized on the grounds that they ignore both the role that our social embeddedness (e.g. our close personal relationships) plays in the development of our autonomy and the fact that individuals' values are shaped and formed in the presence of social features. They have also come under attack, often by feminist critics,<sup>68</sup> because there appear to be several sorts of cases in which individuals rationally and reflectively endorse certain life situations and values, e.g. selflessness, servitude, or *deep* deference,<sup>69</sup> which are putatively not autonomous in virtue of their being self-abnegating or overly deferential. These considerations have prompted some theorists to develop *relational* accounts of autonomy that maintain that social/relational factors (of a certain sort) are conceptually necessary to autonomy in that they play an uneliminable role in the definition of autonomy itself. This is opposed to maintaining that social/relational factors simply make a causal contribution to the development and maintenance of the capacity for autonomy; something which

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<sup>67</sup> They might maintain, for instance, that one cannot autonomously become a slave.

<sup>68</sup> See section 5.2.0.

<sup>69</sup> I.e. deference that does not have any basis that is not itself deferential.

procedural accounts ought to recognize. As we will see, the conception of autonomy that I believe ought to be at the heart of well-being as self-realization, autonomy as a disposition for answerability, is relational in important ways without being committed to any substantive constraint on autonomous valuing.

When it comes to the question of what conception of autonomy and identification ought to be at the heart of a theory of well-being, like well-being as self-realization, I believe that the dialectic concerning which theory one ought to endorse is (or ought to be) shaped by alienation worries. That is, it ought to be shaped with an aim toward capturing the subjective intuition and avoiding offering an alienating conception of an individuals' good. Procedural conceptions of autonomy lie upon a spectrum, from "thin" to "thick" conceptions, depending upon either the nature of the procedure that one must undergo or undertake in order to be autonomous in relation to some desire, commitment, value, etc., *or* the nature of this procedure *along with* the substantive social conditions<sup>70</sup> under which it is undertaken or undergone. "Thicker" theories require individuals to have reflectively endorsed, judged, or taken some other reflective attitude toward that which they are autonomous in relation to while "thinner" conceptions eschew such explicit endorsements. As I mentioned earlier, and as I will argue at length in chapter five, there is good reason to think that substantive accounts of autonomy endorse a problematic value-laden conception of personal autonomy which, were it to serve as the account of autonomy at the heart of a theory of well-being, would raise serious worries about alienation. In light of this, I will presently focus on procedural accounts of autonomy.

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<sup>70</sup> Including one's relationships and the nature of these relationships.

Well-being as self-realization maintains that a person's possessing a capacity for autonomy is important<sup>71</sup> because one's self-realization consists in the realization of those aspects of one's identity that one is autonomous in relation to, i.e. one's "values." The nature of the procedure that one's commitments, desires, etc., must go through<sup>72</sup> in order for one to be autonomous in relation to them can be "thinner" or "thicker" depending upon what one maintains the nature of the procedure is, i.e. what it involves. A paradigmatically "thin" procedural conception of autonomy would, for example, neither put any restriction on content (i.e. what one can autonomously value) nor would it require that one have made any particular evaluative or cognitive judgments about some desire, impulse, or commitment, that occurs in one in order to be autonomous in relation to it. An example of this is Frankfurt's "unchosen love" model according to which in order for one to be autonomous in relation to something one must simply have a "higher-order" attitude that endorses it. The procedural account I am inclined toward, "autonomy as a disposition for answerability," is "thin" in the ways described earlier; i.e. it neither puts any substantive constraints on what individuals can value nor does it require explicit judgments or evaluations. Further, one ought to consider an individual's values as being arational because what one values is not determined by practical reason. That is, the source of the reasons for what one values grounds out in one's idiosyncratic makeup, *not* in some sort of objective grounding (e.g. our "rational" or "human" nature). In contrast, "thick" procedural accounts may maintain that one must actually explicitly rationally or evaluatively endorse something as being "good" or "valuable" in order for one to be considered as autonomous in relation to it and for it to properly be considered one of one's values. A thin conception of autonomy is appealing in the context of the question of what sort of

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<sup>71</sup> As well as being constitutive of being a person.

<sup>72</sup> Either actually or hypothetically.

theory of autonomy ought to be at the heart of a theory of well-being because it is alienation avoiding; that is, because adopting “thicker” conceptions of autonomy might rule out as “autonomous” many of the values whose realization contributes to our well-being (e.g. certain sorts of unreflected upon or endorsed personal relationships, certain sorts of deference, etc.). As I will demonstrate in what follows, I believe that well-being as self-realization ought to adopt a thin, procedural, and “dispositional” account of autonomy, autonomy as a disposition for answerability, because it is more likely to avoid alienation worries than theories of well-being which rely upon thicker conceptions of autonomy.

### *1.3.1 Autonomy as a Disposition for Answerability*

To recap, there are “thinner” or “thicker” conceptions of procedural accounts of autonomy where “thickness” is determined by what the procedure that one desires, values, impulses, etc., must go through in order for one to be autonomous in relation to them involves. Thicker conceptions of autonomy often require, for example, explicit evaluative judgments or rational endorsements. One might justifiably worry that these thicker accounts are overly “rationalistic,” “individualistic,” or “atomistic” and that this courts worries about alienation. That is, if autonomous identification requires explicit and/or reflective evaluative and/or rational endorsement, then many of our putatively autonomous desires, commitments, values, etc., are not in fact autonomous and their realization does not contribute to our well-being. Relatedly, critically reflecting on many of our values, e.g. one valuing certain close relationships (e.g. a romantic partner or one’s children) seems inappropriate. Accordingly, to the extent that thicker conceptions of autonomy require individuals to critically reflect upon, or make particular explicit evaluative judgment about, their desires, values, commitments, etc., they rule out many putative “values” from contributing to



individuals well-being and in doing so offer an alienating conception of an individual's good. After all, they are maintaining that many things which individuals take to positively contribute to their well-being, and which actually improve the quality of their lives, do not in fact do so.

While the preceding considerations incline me toward maintaining that well-being as self-realization ought to endorse a thin procedural account of autonomy, thereby eschewing a substantive approach and remaining content neutral, I leave it open whether one could adopt a thicker conception of autonomy; such an approach would simply need to keep in mind the alienation worries that such approaches often court. My own approach to developing well-being as self-realization, and the conception of autonomy therein, is procedural and *relational* in that it seeks to both remain content neutral, avoid worries about alienation, and capture the fact that individuals' capacity for autonomy is often developed and exercised within certain social conditions and relationships. In light of this, I believe that well-being as self-realization would be well-served by drawing upon the relational account of autonomy offered by Westlund in her article "Rethinking Relational Autonomy."<sup>73</sup> Here Westlund offers a conception of autonomy she calls "autonomy as a disposition for answerability" that she maintains is constitutively relational *without* building any perfectionist ideal into the concept itself, thereby avoiding the alienation worries that afflict substantive accounts.<sup>74</sup> Specifically, she argues that "autonomy in choice and action - and hence, derivatively, in its other senses - relies (at least in part) on the disposition to hold oneself answerable to external critical perspectives on one's action-guiding commitments."<sup>75</sup> That is, an autonomous individual is one who is disposed to hold himself answerable to critical perspectives on his values. As Westlund notes,

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<sup>73</sup> Westlund, A. (2009). Rethinking Relational Autonomy. *Hypatia*, 24(4), 26 – 49.

<sup>74</sup> I.e. without giving up content neutrality and avoiding alienation worries.

<sup>75</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 28.

autonomy as a disposition for answerability “requires an irreducibly dialogical form of reflectiveness and responsiveness to others.”<sup>76</sup> Importantly, this sort of relationality,<sup>77</sup> while constitutively relational, is *formal* rather than substantive in nature and carries with it no specific value commitments. By eschewing any such commitments it can serve as the concept of autonomy central to well-being as self-realization *without* courting worries about alienation.

Autonomy as a disposition for answerability does not simply look at a person’s internal psychological structure (as many procedural accounts do) but also looks to “how the agent positions herself as one practical reasoner among many,” that is, “to how she is disposed to respond to the normative pressures placed on her by *other agents* who may call her to account for the commitments that guide her choices and actions.”<sup>78</sup> While this is a rejection, at least in part, of procedural accounts of autonomy which *solely* consider the structure of an agent’s psychology, e.g. Frankfurt, it does *not* look outside of an individual’s psychology<sup>79</sup> to, say, her social standing and the nature of her relationships (i.e. as many substantive accounts do),<sup>80</sup> but instead to “whether she has a dialogical disposition to hold herself answerable for elements of that hierarchy in the face of critical challenges posed by other agents.”<sup>81</sup> In this way there are internal and external aspects to an individual’s being autonomous both globally and in relation to her values: internal in that an agent’s disposition to hold herself answerable (for her values) to others is a feature of her psychology and external in that this disposition is a disposition to be *engaged* by what is external to her, i.e. points of view other than her own. That is, it requires a certain

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<sup>76</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 28.

<sup>77</sup> I.e. her relational conception of autonomy.

<sup>78</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 33.

<sup>79</sup> I.e. to whether the agent is limited in her reflective capacities to essential monological functions such as endorsing or rejecting lower order attitudes from elsewhere within her own hierarchy of attitudes.

<sup>80</sup> I.e. whether they are suitably egalitarian, etc.

<sup>81</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 33.

sort of receptivity.<sup>82</sup> As Westlund puts this point “autonomy of the will must *itself* be understood in terms of a disposition to hold oneself answerable to others, and not in purely structural terms.”<sup>83</sup>

Before I further demonstrate how well-being as self-realization can provide the conception of “identification” that one wants out of a theory of autonomy (and, relatedly, well-being), I want to explore another aspect of autonomy as a disposition for answerability which demonstrates how it avoids worries about alienation along with how it can benefit from Michael Slote’s recent work in *Moral Sentimentalism*. Again, in order for a value to be one’s own, rather than one’s, say, being “in the grip” of it, one must be open to engagement with the critical perspectives of others on one’s values. This is what makes this account of autonomy *constitutively* relational. Importantly, this critical perspective may belong to an actual individual or merely another in one’s imagination.<sup>84</sup> Regardless, however, of the particular form it takes, autonomy as a disposition for answerability maintains that personal autonomy and responsibility for self “depends on the internalization of a very basic sort of interpersonal relation - namely, a form of justificatory dialogue that (presumably) we begin to learn in our early interactions with parents and other caregivers and continue to develop throughout the process of maturation.”<sup>85</sup> This view of autonomy has the benefit of being able to draw off of both Slote and Baier’s insight that we become autonomous first-persons by being treated well as second-persons as well as Slote’s

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<sup>82</sup> Here I am influenced by Michael Slote’s work on “receptivity,” specifically chapter ten, “The Virtue of Receptivity” in *From Enlightenment to Receptivity*.

<sup>83</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 46 fn. 24.

<sup>84</sup> I.e. one can engage in this dialogue “with one’s self.”

<sup>85</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 36.

work describing how the relations of care are causal contributors to the development capacity for autonomy.<sup>86</sup>

Autonomy as a disposition for answerability is also well served by drawing off of the emphasis on empathy that one finds in Slote's sentimentalism. Specifically, empathy and what Slote calls "receptivity" play a central role in this conception of autonomy. In particular one's being open, i.e. *receptive* and answerable, to others' perspectives on one's values demonstrates that one is autonomous in relation to them. This same emphasis is seen in Westlund's assertion that "self-governance *is* dialogical in the sense that it requires more than one perspective to be in play, even in its internalized forms. It is precisely insofar as one is responsive to perspectives that are *not one's own* that one demonstrates that one is not simply in the grip of one's own commitments, but responsive to normative pressures to which those commitments are subject."<sup>87</sup> It is worth noting that while relying upon a conception of autonomy as answerability, well-being as self-realization maintains that while autonomy requires the disposition to hold oneself answerable to external critical challenges concerning one's values, it is importantly *not* a disposition to defend one's choices and actions to *all* comers, but only to respond to *legitimate* challenges.<sup>88</sup> Rather than rely on an objective rationalistic or evaluative account of what makes a challenge "legitimate," I believe that Slote's emphasis on empathy and care is again helpful here. To begin with, consider Westlund's stipulation that what makes a challenge legitimate is that "it must be situated in a way that makes relational sense of the intervention" such that it is "situated in a relationship that gives context and content to the concern(s)

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<sup>86</sup> See: Baier, A. C. (1981). Cartesian persons. *Philosophia*, 10(3-4), 169–188; Slote, M. (2010). *Moral Sentimentalism*. Oxford University Press; Slote, M. A. (2007). *The Ethics of Care and Empathy*. Routledge. I examine Slote's work on this in section 5.2.1.

<sup>87</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 36.

<sup>88</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 39.

expressed by the critic.”<sup>89</sup> While there are many “sense-giving relationships,” e.g. member of the moral community, mother, husband, neighbor, etc., Westlund offers that regardless of the particulars in any legitimate challenge “it must be clear why it *matters* to my critic why I think and act the way I do, and it must matter to her in a way that she can reasonably expect to matter to me.”<sup>90</sup> I believe that something that is central to any sense giving relationship is care and/or empathy. That is, when one challenges an individual about why he or she has have some value or is doing something, e.g. a parent questioning their adult child’s smoking or joy riding while not wearing a motorcycle helmet,<sup>91</sup> it seems that the reason they are challenging him is that they care about him. This is, at least in part, what makes their challenge legitimate, i.e. what puts normative pressure on who is autonomous in relation to this aspect of his identity, i.e. this value of his. As Westlund notes, challenges that fail to meet this condition, what she calls the condition of “relational situatedness,” may strike an agent as inappropriate or even, in some cases, as outrageous. This is illustrated by, for instance, the fact that if my mother were to question my constantly joyriding without a helmet I would feel as if I owe her more of a response than I would a stranger on the street with whom I stand in no particular relationship. Slote’s sentimentalism gives one a ready answer for what makes a challenge legitimate for an autonomous agent: it is issued by another who cares about and empathizes with one. Accordingly, one of meeting the conditions of relational situatedness would be to exhibit empathy and receptivity toward one who one cares for and is challenging. This might simply require that one emphasize that they are challenging one because they care about one’s well-being. The second condition of legitimacy Westlund offers is “context sensitivity.” This condition stipulates that a legitimate challenge must be

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<sup>89</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 39.

<sup>90</sup> Westlund, 2009: p. 39.

<sup>91</sup> I borrow these examples from Slote.

context sensitive with respect to the kind of response it invites and tolerates.<sup>92</sup> Again, I believe that being receptive and empathic toward another will help to ensure that the context in which one is challenging another for reasons for her values is contextually sensitive. Finally, well-being as self-realization, and the account of autonomy as a disposition for answerability it can have at its heart, is careful to note that there are *many* forms that a justificatory dialogue can take; i.e. there are many ways of demonstrating that one holds oneself answerable to appropriately situated critical challenges.<sup>93</sup>

### 1.3.2 *A Disposition for Answerability and Identification*

Returning to an earlier point, it is worth noting that autonomy as a disposition for answerability still serves to differentiate persons from humans and can provide the conception of identification central to personhood. Consider what Frankfurt says in “On the Necessity of Ideals”: “[t]he essential nature of a person is constituted by his necessary *personal characteristics*. These characteristics have to do particularly with his nature as a person, rather than with his nature as a human being or as a biological organism of a certain type.”<sup>94</sup> Well-being as self-realization maintains that our “personal characteristics” are the autonomous idiosyncratic features of our will (this is, our values), i.e. those that one is disposed to be answerable for from external challenges. That being said, one might be drawn to a thicker conception of autonomy

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<sup>92</sup> Westlund 2009: p. 40.

<sup>93</sup> Westlund provides several good example of this, noting that within the realm of the broadly conversational, one might do any of the following: “provide a life-narrative that manifests one’s reasons; provide an interpretation of relevant experiences, putting them in the context of a wider pattern of meaning; describe the actions of an admired other in a similar situation; tell parables or other stories that are chosen and recounted in a way that demonstrates responsiveness to the question; and probably much more besides. Outside the realm of the conversational, an agent may give explicit or implicit signals that she intends to reflect on what has been said, signs that she has re-deliberated in relevant ways or sought more information as a result of the challenge, or that she is attempting to repair, restructure, or terminate a relationship or practice that has come into question.” (Westlund, 2009: p. 40)

<sup>94</sup> Frankfurt, H. G. (1999). *Necessity, Volition, and Love*. Cambridge University Press. p. 113. My italics.

which maintains, for instance, that persons construct their idiosyncratic identity *qua* person through an explicit activity of identification in which they exercises those capacities constitutive of a thicker conception of autonomy: self-consciousness, critical reflection, evaluative judgment, and practical deliberation.<sup>95</sup> Accordingly, one could then maintain that these capacities allow one to assume a critical reflective distance from the psychological phenomena that occur in one, take higher order attitudes toward them and, in doing so, make oneself autonomous in relation to them, thereby making them properly attributable to oneself (*qua* person). Again, I am not in principle opposed to such an approach; I just believe that centering one's theory of well-being around such a conception of autonomy raises worries about alienation more so than autonomy as a disposition for answerability. It is worth considering why this is the case.

As we have seen, thicker conceptions of procedural autonomy court worries about alienation because some individuals may be constituted such that some of their values, e.g. close personal relationships (say, with their children, spouse, etc.) or autonomous (i.e. not *deep*) deference, would be threatened by what these thicker conceptions of autonomy require for autonomous endorsement or identification. It is a virtue of well-being as self-realization that because of its endorsement of both autonomy as a disposition for answerability<sup>96</sup> and an arational conception of valuing,<sup>97</sup> what it requires for autonomous identification does not threaten the preceding sorts of

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<sup>95</sup> Several theorists, e.g. Korsgaard, maintain that the exercise of the preceding activities play a central role in defining our identity *qua* person and, accordingly, put them under the general rubric of “the activity of self-constitution.” That is, by navigating among the various psychological impulses that occur in one, i.e. by endorsing some and rejecting others, one works to constitute oneself into a unified person. This work aims at the unification of oneself in the face of the preceding impulses and its product is one's identity *qua* person. Such an approach could then plug this conception of personhood into well-being as self-realization and maintain that the realization of one's identity *qua* person is what an individuals' well-being consists in.

<sup>96</sup> I.e. a dispositional and not necessarily evaluative conception of personal autonomy.

<sup>97</sup> I expand upon my dispositional account of valuing in chapter four when I consider Samuel Schffler's recent work on valuing.

values, i.e. values whose realizations contributes to the quality of many individuals' lives. This also helps to protect it against the charge that by having "autonomy" at the heart of both personhood and our well-being *qua* person it is overly "rationalist," individualistic," or "atomistic." That is not to say, however, that it ignores the importance of persons' capacity for "self-consciousness" understood as the ability to reflect upon the impulses, desires, etc., that arise in one.<sup>98</sup> Well-being as self-realization can, for example, agree with what Frankfurt has argued for in his more recent work, *Taking Ourselves Seriously & Getting it Right*,<sup>99</sup> that what makes persons distinct (from other animals) is their ability to "take themselves seriously" or, more philosophically, in our being able to "simultaneously be engaged in whatever is going on in our conscious minds, to detach ourselves from it, and to observe it - as it were - from a distance."<sup>100</sup> That is, insofar as one thinks that one's disposition for answerability can be manifest in an *internal* dialogue in which one is answerable to an imagined external perspective, it requires a form of self-consciousness which allows one to question, and either answer for, or at least feel the normative pressure to defend, one's value commitments.<sup>101</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, Harry Frankfurt offers a good example of a paradigmatically "thin" conception of autonomy. It is no surprise then that in the latter half of the twentieth century it is in the wake of Frankfurt's seminal "Freedom of the

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<sup>98</sup> "Thicker" conceptions of autonomy, often maintain that the reflection enabled by self-consciousness puts one in a position to form a reflective and higher-order response, e.g. endorsement or rejection, to these phenomena and make them attributable to oneself *qua* person.

<sup>99</sup> Frankfurt, 2006.

<sup>100</sup> Frankfurt, 2006: p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> Thicker conceptions of autonomy, e.g. Green and Korsgaard, maintain that What reflective self-consciousness enables is *practical deliberation*, an activity wherein a person is able to distinguish between the *intensity* and *authority* of his or her desires, deliberate about the appropriateness of them and whether one wants to be moved to action by them, identify or reject them, and regulate one's actions in accordance with these deliberations. This activity's product is one's practical identity: one's identity *qua* person.



Will and the Concept of a Person”<sup>102</sup> that many philosophers<sup>103</sup> have taken to differentiating persons from other creatures in virtue of the structure of their will; i.e. in virtue of the fact that they possess the capacity for autonomy. Specifically, while one can attribute (mere) desires, impulses, etc. to the members of several species, some of whom even appear to engage in deliberation and make decisions based upon prior thought, it is characteristic of persons that they are able to form higher order, e.g. second-order, desires. As such, it is distinctive of persons that they can, for instance, form desires concerning which desires they want to move them to action. Understood in this way the concept “person” is meant to capture those aspects of us “which are the subject of our most humane concerns with ourselves and the source of what we regard as most important and most problematical in our lives.”<sup>104</sup> I take these concerns to constitute one’s “values” and maintain that they ought to be the focus of a theory of well-being. That is, I maintain that to the extent that the prudential value of our lives (i.e. its value *for us*) is of immense importance to us (or at least the vast majority of us), one ought to count among “our most human concerns” our well-being; i.e. our well-being *qua* person. Otherwise put, the subject of our most humane concerns is our existence or nature *qua* person. It is worth noting that in holding the preceding commitment and by maintaining that what one values extends beyond what one merely loves, I move beyond Frankfurt’s “unchosen love” based model. Finally, as one has seen, I prefer my account of autonomy as a disposition for answerability to Frankfurt’s unchosen love model because it is sensitive to certain *relational* considerations Frankfurt’s model is not.

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<sup>102</sup> Frankfurt, H. G. (1971). Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68(1), p. 5.

<sup>103</sup> E.g. Christine Korsgaard, Michael Bratman, David Velleman, etc.

<sup>104</sup> Frankfurt, 1971, 6.

#### 1.4 Some Concluding Remarks About Well-Being as Self-Realization

“Persons,” as I conceive of them, are those entities that are properly characterized by those autonomous parts of their volitional make-up, i.e. those things that a person values. Accordingly, persons’ self-realization consists in the realization of these values. Importantly, it is essential to the nature of persons that they are autonomous agents. As such, persons are able to regulate their activity; i.e. they do not act merely as the result of whatever impulses (e.g. desires) move them. Instead, a person regulates his activity by reference to his values. Accordingly, what it is for an individual to “do well as a person” is for that individual to realize his values. Because persons are essentially agents, understanding our well-being *qua* person as consisting in our self-realization shares some similarities with what one might call “well-being as agential-flourishing.” Raibley has recently offered this sort of view in his article “Well-Being and the Priority of Values”<sup>105</sup> in which he argues that for an individual to flourish as an agent is for that individual to steadfastly realize his or her values. Accordingly, in order for a person to resemble the paradigm of a flourishing agent he or she must “(a) have values, as opposed to mere desires or enjoyments, (b) actively realize these values, and (c) maintain the physical and psychological attributes that are the causal basis for the disposition to succeed.”<sup>106</sup>

While I agree with Raibley’s approach in part, i.e. I agree that a person’s well-being consists in the realization of that person’s values, I do not think that his approach appreciates autonomy’s central role in our well-being. As I’ve argued, autonomy is constitutive of personhood. Relatedly, I maintain that an individual’s values are those aspects of his idiosyncratic makeup that he is autonomous in relation to because one’s being autonomous in relation to one’s values is essential to those values *being one’s*

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<sup>105</sup> Raibley, J. (2010). Well-Being and the Priority of Values. *Social Theory and Practice*, 36(4), 593–620.

<sup>106</sup> Raibley 2010: p. 596.

*own*. This is in contrast to those “values” that one has which is the result of, for example, coercion, manipulation, deep deference, etc. While a person’s being an agent is necessary in order for him to have values, it is not sufficient to ensure that those values are autonomous; i.e. that they are truly *one’s own* values. In light of these considerations, while a conception of well-being (like Raibley’s) which holds that our well-being consists in agential flourishing may be able to capture the idea that persons are essentially agents, and that a person’s “values” as opposed to mere desires, impulses, etc. are central to his well-being, it leaves it conceptually open that a person’s values could all be the result of manipulation, coercion, deep deference, or other autonomy undermining processes or conditions. Such an individual would not be autonomous in relation to these values, yet if they were realized, then this individual would be a flourishing agent and enjoying a high level of well-being, at least according to Raibley. In contrast, I maintain that an individual’s being well-off, i.e. having a high level of well-being, is incompatible with that individual’s values being the result of autonomy violating or undermining processes so that an individual’s being autonomous in relation to his “values” is necessary in order for him to be “faring well.” Insofar as approaches like well-being as agential flourishing cannot capture this it is flawed as a theory of well-being.

#### *1.4.1 Well-Being as Self-Realization’s Normative Authority*

While one’s identity *qua* member of the human species, including the constituents of one’s well-being *qua* human, is defined by the characteristics of one’s species, one’s identity *qua* person is characterized by those aspects of one’s idiosyncratic makeup that one is autonomous in relation to, what I have been calling “one’s values.” One’s activity *qua* person consists in one’s being disposed to be answerable for those values and one’s acting in accordance with them. A corollary to

this is that in order for the movements emanating from one to be one's actions, that is, for them to be expressive of oneself in the ways in which an action must be (i.e. for them to be properly attributable to one *qua* person),<sup>107</sup> it must result from one's entire nature working as an integrated whole.<sup>108</sup> That is, they must result from one's values.<sup>109</sup> Again, one can contrast this with one's merely acting as an animal does, i.e. simply acting as the result of various impulses that move one to action. It is in virtue of their being agents that persons *must* act and in being autonomous they must be the cause of their own action, i.e. they must act for reasons. One source of these reasons<sup>110</sup> is one's identity *qua* person, which is constituted by one's values (i.e. one's identity *qua* person). It is the realization of this identity, the realization of these values (i.e. an individual's "self-realization"), that a person's well-being consists in.

At this point, one (hopefully) has a clear (initial) conception of my view of our well-being *qua* person as consisting in self-realization. One does well *qua* person by realizing one's values (i.e. one's identity *qua* person). Because one's values constitute one's identity *qua* person, and are those aspects of one's identity that one is properly identified with because one is autonomous in relation to them,<sup>111</sup> well-being as self-realization is able to capture the subjective intuition and avoids offering an alienating conception of an individual's good despite its being an objective theory of well-being. This helps to ensure that well-being as self-realization is normatively adequate and authoritative. That is, individuals have reason to care about what the theory recommends. The source of these reasons is, again, one's idiosyncratic makeup *qua*

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<sup>107</sup> And not merely to be an act attributable to one in the gross and literal sense that reflexive movements of one's body are.

<sup>108</sup> Korsgaard, 2009: 1.4.1.

<sup>109</sup> Thicker conceptions of autonomy might here requires that action" requires that one's will be unified in identifying with one desire, impulse, etc. over another such that one is unified as a person.

<sup>110</sup> Were this a dissertation on normative ethical theories I would be able to engage with the other sources of reasons. Considering that my dissertation is on the nature of our well-being exploring these other sources is far beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>111</sup> I.e. one is disposed to be answerable for them.

person. Consequently, insofar as one values something one has prudential reason to realize that value<sup>112</sup> because such realization is what one's well-being consists in. It is worth reiterating that well-being as self-realization maintains that one's valuing something does not necessarily involve one's believing or judging that thing is "objectively valuable," i.e. I neither subscribe to the view that objective value must be grounded in our rational nature or in our "human nature."<sup>113</sup> Instead, the source of our values and the prudential reason we have to realize these values is grounded in our idiosyncratic makeup *qua* person.

Thus far I have offered an initial formulation of well-being as self-realization. Admittedly, I have not addressed any problems the theory might face. Perhaps more importantly, I have not demonstrated why one ought to prefer my theory to competitor theories of well-being. I propose to tackle both of these issues in the following chapters. In particular, in the next three chapters I consider various formulations of the three predominant theories of well-being: objective-list, hedonist, and desire-satisfaction theories of well-being. As I consider these theories I

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<sup>112</sup> As one will see in the chapters that follow, there can be many modes of valuation.

<sup>113</sup> One could also explore the ways in which thicker conception of autonomy might fill out well-being as self-realization. Again, consider T.H. Green. Green held that an individual's pre-deliberative "impulses" (or as Green calls them "solicitations") typically present their objects as something that contributes to one's good, or is "good to have." One's "identifying" oneself with that inclination amounts to an endorsement of that presentation. That is, in endorsing some solicitations (thereby making them part of one's identity) as something whose realization would be part of one's good, one makes their realization part of one's good. Constructivism, in this sense, is a feature of both Green's idealist account and of a self-realization conception of prudential value. In each, self-conscious self-activity generates normativity. That is, one's activity and identity *qua* person defines one's well-being *qua* person and gives oneself reason to pursue that good. In this way well-being as self-realization possesses normative authority. The normative authority (i.e. reason-givingness) of well-being as self-realization's type of approach could also get support in Korsgaard's work. Korsgaard, like Green, holds that our practical identity confers a kind of value on certain whole actions and governs our choices in virtue of its being the source of both incentives as well as principles in terms of which we accept and reject proposed actions. Because of this, one's practical identity, i.e. one's identity *qua* person, has normative authority for one. Applied to well-being as self-realization: if our well-being is understood to consist in our self-realization, and the "self" in question is one's practical identity (i.e. one's identity *qua* person), then one has reason to care about one's well-being (i.e. one's self-realization *qua* person), i.e. what is good for one *qua* person. This is why well-being as self-realization is normatively authoritative: the very way in which it captures the subjective intuition (by appealing to our identity *qua* person) also ensures that it will be normatively authoritative. This is important because insofar as a theory of well-being fails to capture the subjective intuition and offers an alienating conception of an individual's good, it lacks normative authority.

demonstrate the ways in which well-being as self-realization is theoretically superior to them. Often this is in virtue of its being able to capture our intuitions about both the subjective intuition and flourishing and deprivation better than them. These, however, are not its only theoretical virtues; others emerge as the theory develops as I both contrast it with other prominent theories of well-being and their various iterations and defend it against various objections.

## Chapter Two: Objective-List Theories of Well-Being

**Khitan General:** My fear is that my sons will never understand me... Hao! Dai ye! We won again! [*Cheers*] This is good. But what is best in life?

**Khitan Warrior:** The open steppe, a fleet horse, falcons at your wrist, and the wind in your hair.

**Khitan General:** Wrong! Conan, what is best in life?

**Conan:** To crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentations of their women!

**Khitan General:** [*Cheers*]...That is good.

- *Conan the Barbarian*

### 2.1 Introductory Remarks

The most prominent type of objective theory of well-being, and the focus of this chapter, is *objective-list* theories of well-being. In contrast to holding that an individual's well-being consists (solely)<sup>114</sup> in that individual's experiencing pleasure (hedonism) or having his desires<sup>115</sup> satisfied (desire-satisfaction accounts), objective-list theories maintain that an individual's well-being consists in that individual having certain objective goods in his life. These objectively prudentially valuable goods are the items on their "objective-list."<sup>116</sup> These goods are "objectively prudentially valuable" in that they are good for an individual regardless of that individual's orientation toward them.<sup>117</sup> Objective-list theories' main theoretical task is giving an account of what it is in virtue of which some good "earns" its place on their list.<sup>118</sup> That is, they must give an account of the prudential "good-making" feature that these goods all have in common. The two dominant types of objective-list theories, *Brute-*

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<sup>114</sup> I say "solely" because "pleasure" could appear as one item among several others on an objective-list theory's list of objective prudential goods.

<sup>115</sup> Or, as the case might be, a particular subset of those desires.

<sup>116</sup> Accordingly, what it is for something to be good for an individual is for it to be an item on the list of prudential (objective) goods.

<sup>117</sup> There are, however, notable exceptions to this. I consider, for example, some objective-list theories that are careful to stipulate that certain objective goods have "pro-attitudes" as a constitutive part of them.

<sup>118</sup> That is, objective-list theories are, by their very nature enumerative account of well-being so they must give an account of what it is in virtue of which the items on their list belong on the list. That being said, several brute-list theorists, e.g. Guy Fletcher, reject the demand for an explanatory account and maintain that a purely enumerative theory of well-being can be normatively adequate.

*List* and *Perfectionist* or *Eudaimonist* theories of well-being, are attempts to provide this account. Brute-list theories maintain that an individual's well-being consists in that individual's having certain objective goods in his life, specifically, those goods on their list of prudential goods. These goods are prudential goods but are not necessarily perfectionist goods. In contrast, Perfectionist objective-list theories maintain that items on their list of prudential goods are on the list because of the role that they play in the *perfection* of our (human) nature. Accordingly, the general goods on their lists are both prudential *and* perfectionist goods. Eudaimonist theories maintain that an individual's well-being consists in that individual's "flourishing" which requires that an individual (develop and) possess certain capacities through which he can enjoy those goods characteristic of the class (e.g. species) to which he belongs.<sup>119</sup>

It is worth emphasizing that even though I lump together "perfectionist" and "eudaimonist" objective-list theories of well-being, eudaimonist theories, i.e. theories which maintain that an individual's well-being consists in that individual's being a "being a good specimen of its kind," are not necessarily "perfectionist." More specifically, eudaimonist theories need not be perfectionist because they can maintain that an individual can flourish<sup>120</sup> without necessarily *perfecting* the capacities characteristic of the class of which that individual is a member. In contrast, to say that something has perfectionist value is to say that it exemplifies the *excellences* characteristic of its particular nature.<sup>121,122</sup> A perfectionist account of prudential value might look like the following:

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<sup>119</sup> This will typically require the exercise of one's "distinctively human capacities."

<sup>120</sup> And have the objective goods in his life that come with such flourishing.

<sup>121</sup> Sumner, 1996: p. 23.

<sup>122</sup> That being said, both eudaemonist and perfectionist assessments of a life often appeal to standards that are derived from the species to which the subject of that life belongs.



We begin by seeking the essential characteristics of creatures of the species in question - what it is that identifies them as the particular kind of creatures they are. These will then be the characteristics whose possession at an exemplary level makes an individual member of the species a particularly good specimen of that kind. The traits or abilities so selected will count as personal excellences, conferring perfectionist value on their bearers.<sup>123</sup>

Despite their differences, a common trait running through most eudaimonist and perfectionist objective-list theories is their defining the nature of prudential value by an appeal to “human nature,” “characteristic human flourishing,” or “essential human properties,” which serves as a standard<sup>124</sup> against which they make judgments<sup>125</sup> about individuals’ well-being. Again, regardless of whether they are brute-list, perfectionist, or eudaimonist, objective-list theories’ are faced with an epistemic question: how does one pick out which items belong on the list of objective goods; i.e. how does one provide an *enumerative* account of what our well-being consists in. Perfectionist and Eudaimonist theories go further, however, and justify how they discover/decide/etc. what goods belong on their list of prudential goods. That is, they provide an *explanatory* account of what the prudential good making property is.<sup>126</sup> In response to the epistemic question, Perfectionist and Eudaimonist theories explicitly appeal to our “nature”<sup>127</sup> in order to provide this account while brute-list theories employ various other methods to do so.<sup>128</sup> For instance, brute-list theories can justify the items on their list by maintaining that the items on their list belong there because they have arisen as the result of reflective equilibrium.<sup>129</sup> That is, they maintain that one can “discover” what items belong on the list of objective prudential goods by

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<sup>123</sup> Sumner, 1996: p. 23

<sup>124</sup> This standard typically consists of an account of what the constituents of a characteristically “good human life” are.

<sup>125</sup> E.g. constitution and evaluation judgments.

<sup>126</sup> Their list itself is the theory’s enumerative account.

<sup>127</sup> Specifically, our “human nature.”

<sup>128</sup> It is worth noting that brute-list theorist might be relying upon intuitions that can justify a claim about which items belong on the list but need not necessarily explain why the item belongs there. My thanks to Michael Slote for pressing me on this distinction.

<sup>129</sup> This, for instance, is the approach taken by Guy Fletcher (2013).

considering our reflective judgments concerning our considered intuitions about the nature of the good life. In practice this could involve taking our considered judgments and intuitions about the nature of our well-being and looking for a set of general principles that systematize them. Ideally, this method would allow brute-list theories to make intuitively compelling judgments about individuals' flourishing and deprivation because they would be built up from our widely shared intuitions about human well-being.<sup>130</sup> While one might initially find this sort of appeal to intuition problematic, worrying that such theorists are cherry-picking amongst our intuitions, it is worth noting that any theory of well-being is going to appeal to our intuitions at some level.<sup>131</sup>

In what follows I consider prominent examples of brute-list, Perfectionist, and Eudaimonist objective-list theories of well-being in order to demonstrate both their theoretical shortcomings and the ways in which well-being as self-realization is superior to them. While there are many ways in which well-being as self-realization is theoretically superior to these theories, a large part of my argument centers around the fact that while objective-list theories are (at their best) able to justify and explain compelling judgments about flourishing and deprivation, their species-centered approach fails to capture the subjective intuition and thereby offers an alienating conception of an individual's good. This inability to respect our intuitions about alienation (i.e. to respect and "alienation constraint") either robs or seriously diminishes objective-list theories' normative authority. Again, well-being as self-realization is able to both respect and capture the subjective intuitions and avoid worries about alienation where objective-list theories are not. Finally, in various

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<sup>130</sup> That being said, this same method makes these theories offer a (likely) alienating conception of individuals' good.

<sup>131</sup> That is, hedonists appeal to the intuition that only pleasure matters (non-derivatively) to well-being while desire-satisfaction theorists appeal to the intuition that desires, because of their intentional and perspectival nature, are ideally suited to capture the essence of prudential value.

“problem cases,” i.e. cases in which it is either difficult to evaluate an individual’s level of well-being or in which we are torn between conflicting judgments, well-being as self-realization is able to offer more compelling verdicts concerning our experience of putative deprivations than objective-list theories. I begin with brute-list objective-list theories of well-being.

## 2.2 Brute-List Theories of Well-Being

Considered at their most abstract, brute-list theories of well-being<sup>132</sup> operate on two levels: a type and a token level. On the type level they hold that there are various prudential goods<sup>133</sup> whose presence in an individual’s life is directly/intrinsically/non-instrumentally good for that individual.<sup>134</sup> On the token level, brute-list theorists claim that the occurrence of one of these goods in an individual’s life<sup>135</sup> contributes to an individual’s well-being if and only if (and because) it is an instance of one of the general goods on the list.<sup>136</sup> The presence of these goods in an individual’s life might either be dependent upon that individual having a pro-attitude toward that good<sup>137</sup> or they might be present in an individual’s life and contribute to that individual’s well-being regardless of that individual’s orientation toward that good. Some of the goods that brute-list theories typically posit include: health, accomplishment, friendship,<sup>138</sup> knowledge, pleasure, aesthetic experience, etc.

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<sup>132</sup> Henceforth I will refer to such theories as “brute-list theories of well-being” or “brute-list theories” as opposed to “objective-list brute list theories of well-being” for ease of exposition.

<sup>133</sup> I.e. the items on their list.

<sup>134</sup> From here forward I treat “good for an individual,” “prudentially valuable an individual,” and “contributes to that individual’s well-being” interchangeably.

<sup>135</sup> It is also incumbent upon brute-list theories to give an account of what it means for a token of a certain type of prudential good to be “in” an individual’s life. As we will see in section 2.2.2, there appear to be several cases in which a token instance of a good is “in” an individual’s life yet does not positively contribute to that individual’s well-being

<sup>136</sup> Some theorists offer value-laden conceptions of well-being according to which the presence of the items on the list does not contribute to an individual’s well-being if they are obtained immorally.

<sup>137</sup> That is certain goods, e.g. “friendship,” have a pro-attitude as a constitutive part of them.

<sup>138</sup> And other close personal relationships.

Because their lists are often built up from our widely held and shared intuitions<sup>139</sup> brute-list theories often do an adequate job capturing our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation. That being said, their approach is beset by two significant theoretical problems. First, because of the way in which they derive the constituents of our well-being, e.g. by relying upon “widely” held intuitions, they do a poor job capturing the subjective intuition (i.e. a conception of individuals’ well-being which is sensitive to what they are like) and offer a conception of individuals’ well-being which they may be alienated from. Second, many brute-list theories, e.g. Thomas Hurka and Guy Fletcher, espouse a *locative analysis* of “goodness”<sup>140</sup> and inherit all of the problems associated with such approaches which include worries about alienation. Because the former problem is an issue for all objective-list theories, I begin with the latter.

### 2.2.1 Locative Analyses of “The Good”

Locative analyses of the good have their modern roots in G.E. Moore’s metaethics, specifically his work *Principia Ethica*.<sup>141</sup> Here Moore maintained that when it comes to the question of what it is for something to be (prudentially) good for one “it is obvious, if we reflect, that the only thing which can belong to me, which can be mine, is something which is good, and not the fact that it is good. When, therefore, I talk of anything I get as ‘my own good,’ I must mean either that the thing I get is good, or that my possessing it is good.”<sup>142</sup> With this Moore set the standard for modern locative analyses of goodness that understand “good,” and “goodness,” as being conceptually prior to *good for*. That is, locative analyses of goodness stipulate that in order to understand what it is for something to be “good for” an individual one

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<sup>139</sup> This is especially the case when the items on their lists get their place on the list as a result of reflective equilibrium.

<sup>140</sup> Or, “the good.”

<sup>141</sup> Moore, G. E. (2004). *Principia Ethica*. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications.

<sup>142</sup> Moore, 2004: p. 98.

must first have an independent conception of what it is for something to be “good” *simpliciter* and what it means for an individual to stand in an appropriate relationship to that thing such that it is good for him. Accordingly, when it comes to (intrinsic) prudential goods, Moore considered such goods to be what he called “organic unities,” i.e. he maintained that goodness supervenes on a complex set of facts: a particular good and an individual’s having that good in his life. It is the organic unity that would be considered “good.”<sup>143</sup>

Moore argued that one could identify those things that are *intrinsically* good by employing what he called “a test of isolation.”<sup>144</sup> That is, he believed that one can test whether some putative good is indeed intrinsically good by questioning whether we would consider it to be good even if it were the only thing in the universe. If we would, then it is in fact intrinsically good. The impetus behind this test was Moore’s belief that things that are intrinsically good are so because they have intrinsic properties that alone are sufficient to make them good. Moore (as well as other locative theorists) realized that ascribing goodness to objects or events is rather counter-intuitive.<sup>145</sup> His solution to this was to hold that goodness is only properly ascribable to “organic wholes.” That is, what is (prudentially) good is not, for example, a beautiful sunset or a work of art, but an individual’s observing a work of art or a beautiful sunset with an appropriate attitude of, for example, appreciation.<sup>146</sup> Accordingly, it is the *whole*, i.e. an intrinsic good and an individual who has the

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<sup>143</sup> See Ch. 2 in *Principia Ethica*.

<sup>144</sup> Again, to be clear, Moore was talking about what is intrinsically good, not what is intrinsically good-for someone. My thanks to Michael Slote for pressing me on this distinction.

<sup>145</sup> I.e. the intrinsic “goodness” of the Mona Lisa even if no one ever saw it or the goodness of a beautiful sunset in a world without sentient creatures.

<sup>146</sup> Accordingly, the individual, the good (i.e. the sunset), and the proper attitude (appreciation) all need to stand in a particular relationship to one another for “goodness” to be manifest.

proper orientation (e.g. attitude) toward that good,<sup>147</sup> which *goodness* is properly attributable to.

As mentioned, two of the brute-list theorists I consider, Thomas Hurka and Guy Fletcher, appear to espouse a locative analysis of the good,<sup>148</sup> including its commitment to the view that “good” is conceptually prior to “good for,” and this explains some of their theories’ theoretical weaknesses. Now, while there is nothing inherently wrong with maintaining that “good” is conceptually prior to “good for,” brute-list theories which are committed to this view end up both making themselves vulnerable to several criticisms and committed to counter-intuitive judgments about individuals’ well-being. There are, for example, rather commonplace scenarios in which by all sensible understandings of what it is for an individual to “have a good in his life” an individual has a putative good in his life yet it does not appear to contribute to his well-being. That is, maintaining that something can be “good” prior to its being “good for” anyone allows for possibilities in which individuals’ putatively have that which is “good” (*simpliciter*) in their lives without it appearing as if their well-being has been contributed to. In light of these considerations, one of the underlying reasons why well-being as self-realization is theoretically superior to brute-list theories which espouse locative analyses of the good is due to the fact that it maintains that “good for” is conceptually prior to “good.” That is, I do not think that the universe is composed of things which are simply “good” and which are “good for” us when we stand in some sort of “fitting” or otherwise appropriate relationship to them. Instead, things are only good for us *qua* person because we, as persons, are the

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<sup>147</sup> Thereby having it (that good) in his or her life.

<sup>148</sup> Fletcher, for his part, defines a locative analysis of “good for” in the following way: “Locative Analysis of good for: G is non-instrumentally good for X if and only if (i) G is non-instrumentally good, (ii) G has properties that generate, or would generate, agent-relative reasons for X to hold pro-attitudes towards G for its own sake, (iii) G is essentially related to X.” Fletcher, G. The Locative Analysis of Good For Formulated and Defended. *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 6(1), 1–26; p. 3.

sorts of entities who can welcome, reject, or, more generally, stand in an autonomous relationship to and *value*, those things in our lives in virtue of our capacity for autonomy. In order to clarify the preceding conceptual priority (i.e. the priority of “good for” over “good”) it is helpful to consider Korsgaard’s recent work on the nature of prudential value, especially her views in “The Relational Nature of the Good”<sup>149</sup> and “On Having a Good.”<sup>150</sup>

### 2.2.2 A Small Aside on the Conceptual Priority of “Good-For” Over “Good”

Korsgaard’s views on the nature of prudential value are worth considering because they both share some similarities with my own view and raise some important initial doubts concerning locative analyses of the good. To begin with, Korsgaard makes an important observation: when we say that something is “good for” an individual, there are two senses in which we might mean “good for.” First, there is *final* sense of good for: things that are good for an individual in this sense are good for their own sake.<sup>151</sup> Things that are good for an individual in this sense are non-instrumentally good for him, i.e. they are intrinsically prudentially valuable. The second sense of “good for,” what Korsgaard initially calls “the motherly sense,” picks out those things that are instrumentally valuable for an individual because they *promote* some final good which that individual values for its own sake.

The preceding senses of “good for” are often not properly distinguished. Korsgaard seeks to disambiguate them with the following example. She illustrates the “motherly” sense of *good for* by imagining an individual, Alfred, whose mother tells him that broccoli is *good for* him. In this case Alfred’s mother is not saying that Alfred’s eating broccoli will either realize or further some final end he has, but that

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<sup>149</sup> Korsgaard, C. (2013). The Relational Nature of the Good. In R. Schafer-Landau (Ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* (Vol. 8). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>150</sup> Korsgaard, C. (Forthcoming). On Having a Good. *Philosophy: Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy*, 1–35.

<sup>151</sup> They might also constitute things that are good for their own sake or contribute toward them.

eating it promotes his health.<sup>152</sup> Health, however, is not merely a means to extend our lives.<sup>153</sup> Instead, we typically value our health because it exemplifies the excellence or goodness of our physical lives. Accordingly, when we say that something is “good for” someone in the motherly sense, we mean that it either causes or constitutes that individual’s overall well-functioning in some dimension of his life.<sup>154</sup> In this case the final and motherly senses of “good for” an individual both make reference to the same sets of facts about an individual but do so from two different perspectives. The motherly sense of “good for” considers an individual as a functional system<sup>155</sup> so that whatever is good for an individual in this sense is whatever enables that individual to function well. In contrast, the final sense of “good for” concerns what is good for an individual according to his own point of view. Korsgaard understands the final sense of “good for” as being a normative concept whose function is to schematically make out the solution to certain kinds of problems we have to solve. The problem in the case at hand, the nature of prudential value (i.e. understanding what is good for a person), arises because of the fact that as persons we are reflective agents who do not automatically do what we desire, instinct prompts us to, etc. That is, in being a person one cannot “treat the bare fact that something attracts you as a reason to try to *go for it* without further ado.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> That is, “the motherly use of “good-for” applies to the mean to various kinds of health, while the final use of good-for applies to ends, which, as it happens, sometimes coincide with the means to various kinds of health” (On Having a Good, 16).

<sup>153</sup> I.e. we do not typically treat it as *purely* of instrumental value.

<sup>154</sup> “On Having a Good” 17.

<sup>155</sup> To say that something is good for some X, which is a functional system, is to say that it has the properties that enable it to perform its function well. Korsgaard argues that if something is a functional system then “the properties that enable it to perform its function well are the properties that make it a good one, and the conditions that tend to promote and protect those properties are good for it” so that functional systems, by their very nature have a good (On Having a Good, 20).

<sup>156</sup> Related to this Korsgaard argues that as agents we encounter what she calls “the problem of the good,” the problem that we, as reflective agents, are forced to confront “what to go for” (On having a good, 22-23). We also face what she calls the “problem of the right,” the problem of what to do. She believes that these two problems are interrelated in that one “cannot actually decide to go for something without first deciding that there’s some way of going for it...that you might conceivably find it worth deciding what to do” (On Having a Good, 22-23).



Persons can (and, I would argue, must) view themselves as agents and, as such, as being a functional system of a sort that (*qua* functional system) is subject to standards of success and failure. The kind of success which we associate with agency, along with what it means for one to do well *qua* person/agent, does not merely concern our bringing about some end in the world, something which could happen purely by accident; but that for us to be successful in action is to be or make ourselves into the *kind of thing* that reliably achieves that end (i.e. bringing about an intended action).<sup>157,158</sup> When one regards one's ends as good for one in the final sense of good for, one also regards the things that promote it, and one's condition (which is necessary for its realization) as good for one as well. An upshot of this, Korsgaard argues, is that an agent necessarily values his own efficacy, i.e. his ability to reliably achieve his ends, and therefore "necessarily values his own functional good as an aspect of his final good."<sup>159</sup> I believe that something similar is true for well-being as self-realization. That is, because it is constitutive of a person's valuing something that he wants to realize that value, he necessarily values his ability (i.e. his efficacy) to realize that value. Relatedly, one also values the things that promote the realization of one's values as well.

Many Eudaimonist theories of well-being<sup>160</sup> consider organisms (like us) to be functional systems whose ends are "to maintain itself, to survive and reproduce, or to live the life characteristic of its kind."<sup>161</sup> Understood as such, the function of an organism *qua* functional system is to continue being what it is: to constitute itself.<sup>162</sup> Korsgaard argues that when an organism is an agent (e.g. a person) it constitutes

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<sup>157</sup> On Having a Good, 25.

<sup>158</sup> As we will see in chapter four, I maintain that the nature of our values is such that we want to be active in bringing about their realization through our own efforts.

<sup>159</sup> "On Having a Good," p. 25.

<sup>160</sup> E.g. "Aristotelian" accounts, e.g. Foot and Hursthouse.

<sup>161</sup> "On Having a Good," 25.

<sup>162</sup> Korsgaard, 2009: p. 2.

itself, in part, by having conscious states that track (at least roughly and defensibly) what is good or bad for it in the functional sense. The difference between animals and persons is that while animals merely *perceive* what is good for them, persons also *conceive* what is good for them as being something worth going for, i.e. as good for them in the final sense.<sup>163</sup> Applied to well-being as self-realization, persons can reflect upon a desire, impulse, etc., and identify with it, thereby making it something he values, something whose realization is now part of his good. It is in this way that there is good reason to think that for us, i.e. for persons, there is good reason to treat “good for” as conceptually prior to “good.” That is, because our valuing something is prior to its being valuable for us, i.e. good for us in the final sense, or as Korsgaard puts this “it is because there are things that necessarily strike agents as things to go for, that there are final goods,”<sup>164</sup> that “good for” is conceptually prior to “good.”

Importantly, and as will become evident in what follows, what distinguishes my approach from species-based objective theories (e.g. Perfectionist and Eudaimonist objective-list theories) is that the final good<sup>165</sup> for persons, unlike mere animals, is not mere survival, reproduction, self-maintenance, or leading a healthy life of its kind. Instead, the characteristic function of persons is the constitution of their practical identities. This “self-constitution” involves a person’s adopting and maintaining his practical identity, i.e. the roles and relationships which define what we *value*, i.e. the terms in which we value ourselves and find our lives worth living and our actions as worth undertaking.<sup>166</sup> Further, the things that promote and constitute our practical identities are not merely our functional good;<sup>167</sup> the successful

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<sup>163</sup> As Korsgaard puts this point: “what is functionally good for them [persons]...is also good from their point of view, and so is their final good.”

<sup>164</sup> “On Having a Good,” p. 27.

<sup>165</sup> I.e. what is intrinsically good

<sup>166</sup> Korsgaard, 2009: section 1.4.

<sup>167</sup> I.e. good for us in Korsgaard’s “motherly sense.”

maintenance of our practical identity is the excellence of our lives (*qua* person) so that “the things that promote and constitute the maintenance of our practical identities are final goods because as self-constituting beings, we see them as things to go for.”<sup>168</sup> Put in terms of well-being as self-realization: the things that promote and constitute what we value<sup>169</sup> are final goods, i.e. prudentially valuable for us *qua* person.

While the preceding considerations are by no means conclusive, it is my hope that they bolster the idea that when it comes to persons what is “good for” them is conceptually prior to what is “good.” That is, something cannot be good for a person in the final sense, unless he is positively oriented toward it; i.e. unless he values it. That being said, although something can be “motherly” good for one without an individual’s valuing it, it cannot be all things considered good or good for in the final sense, unless that individual values it. While there are several aspects of Korsgaard’s approach which I do not agree with,<sup>170</sup> having an idea of her view, e.g. that everything that is good in the final sense (intrinsically prudentially valuable) must be good for someone (i.e. a person)<sup>171</sup> and the only reason why anything matters in the world (i.e. is intrinsically valuable) is because the world contains entities (i.e. persons) *for* whom things can be good or bad, is useful because it will help me to articulate my argument against brute-list theorists.

### 2.2.3 Hurka on *The Best Things in Life*

In *The Best Things in Life* Hurka offers a brute-list theory of well-being that asserts that “the best things in life,” i.e. those objective goods that contribute to an

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<sup>168</sup> “On Having a Good,” p. 28.

<sup>169</sup> Which constitute our practical identities, i.e. our identities *qua* person.

<sup>170</sup> For instance, I think that she endorses a “thick” conception of autonomy which raises worries about alienation.

<sup>171</sup> Otherwise put, everything that has a good (in the final sense) is an agent so that everything that is good is necessarily some agent’s good.

individual's well-being, are: pleasure, knowledge, achievement, virtue, friendship, and love. He argues that each of these are intrinsically prudentially valuable goods whose occurrence in an individual's life contributes positively to the quality of an individual's life such that "how good a life is depends, first, on the individual good things it contains: its individual pleasure, items of understanding, and so on."<sup>172</sup> As is (hopefully) apparent, in maintaining that the preceding goods are objectively good and that it is good for an individual to have them in his life, Hurka espouses a locative analysis of the good of the sort we saw earlier.

The brute-list theory that Hurka offers in *The Best Things in Life* is underpinned by an account of prudential value that has two serious problems. First, because it offers an account of individuals' well-being which does not make what is good for an individual dependent upon his idiosyncratic/evaluative makeup or perspective, it offers an alienating conception of an individual's good which cannot capture the subjective intuition. Second, while Hurka's putative project in *The Best Things in Life* is his offering a brute-list theory of well-being, he often appears to treat the *prudential* value of an individual's life<sup>173</sup> as being equivalent to its *perfectionist* value. While there is nothing *inherently* flawed with such a *Perfectionist* approach,<sup>174</sup> in *The Best Things in Life* it is not clear that that is what we are being offered.<sup>175</sup> Accordingly, I seek to draw out the problems that his brute-list theory faces which treats a life's perfectionist value as being equivalent to its prudential value. While one could demonstrate the two preceding problems by considering any of the items that

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<sup>172</sup> Hurka, 2010: p. 164.

<sup>173</sup> I.e. its value for the individual whose life it is.

<sup>174</sup> After all, elsewhere Hurka appears to offer such a theory. See his: Hurka, T. (1996). *Perfectionism*. Oxford: OUP, and Hurka, T. (2000) *Virtue, Vice, and Value*. Oxford: OUP.

<sup>175</sup> That is, Hurka is very clear that in *The Best Things in Life* he is offering an account of prudential value, yet he does not argue for Perfectionist value being prudentially valuable.

Hurka considers to be “the best things in life,” I will limit my attention to one of his putative goods: knowledge.

According to Hurka an individual’s possessing some bit of knowledge<sup>176</sup> involves that individual’s believing something that is true. Such knowledge, he maintains, is prudentially valuable for one because it gives one a tie to reality. Further, he asserts that the wider ranging and more explanatorily fruitful the knowledge one has, the better off one is<sup>177</sup> because it gives one a tie to reality. I disagree, and, as I will demonstrate, whether or not a particular token of some putative “objective” good, like knowledge, contributes positively to the quality of an individual’s life depends entirely upon what that individual values.<sup>178</sup> Again, well-being as self-realization is an *explanatory* theory of well-being in that it gives an account of the conditions under which something contributes to an individual’s well-being, namely, when it realizes one of that individual’s values.

In the case of “knowledge” there is an intrinsic (putative) good, knowledge, and a person who has this good “in his life” when he is in a mental state which puts him in an “appropriate” relationship with this objective good, i.e. he believes something which is true. Counter-examples to this sort of case, i.e. instances in which a putative objective good does not appear to contribute to an individual’s well-being, appear easy to come by. Begging my reader’s forgiveness I want to return to an example that is very similar to another I have offered: our car mechanic. This time, however, the information under consideration is a bit more “grounded.” Accordingly, imagine a car mechanic and a particular piece of wide-ranging and explanatorily useful knowledge: the knowledge surrounding the chemical reactions that take place in a combustion engine. Now imagine that our mechanic could undergo a relatively

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<sup>176</sup> I.e. having a token of that type of good “in” his life.

<sup>177</sup> I.e. the higher one’s level of well-being.

<sup>178</sup> I.e. it depends upon that individual’s idiosyncratic evaluative makeup.

simple and speedy course of study through which he could acquire the preceding knowledge.<sup>179</sup> It seems plausible that our mechanic could rationally refuse to undertake the preceding course of study on the grounds that doing so would not contribute positively to the quality of his life. That is, he might maintain that he is happy knowing how engines work (say, enough to competently do his job) but he does not really care why they work that way. That being said, he might have a business partner, another mechanic (say, an identical twin even) who is exactly like him except that he is interested in pursuing the course of study under consideration. That is, it is something that he is positively oriented toward, say, because he *values* knowing the “why” behind the “how” he has already mastered.

In the preceding case there are two individuals, car mechanics, and a particular piece of wide-ranging and explanatorily useful knowledge, the chemical reactions occurring in a combustion engine. Our question is: does having this token of knowledge, an allegedly objective prudential good, makes both mechanics lives better *for them*? Before answering this question, I want to concede that by having the knowledge under consideration both mechanics’ lives would have more *epistemic* and possibly *perfectionist* value.<sup>180</sup> Accordingly, in order to evaluate Hurka’s theory we want to test whether we think that the knowledge at hand contributes positively to the quality of each mechanic’s life *for him* in virtue of it being a token of a one of the goods on Hurka’s brute-list which is in an individual’s life.

I believe that in the case of the two mechanics the most plausible evaluation of knowledge’s prudential value is that it would contribute positively to the quality of

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<sup>179</sup> Further, imagine that he would not be using the (albeit short) time in which he would be gaining this knowledge to do something “worthwhile,” say, he is going to play pushpin or watch “The Jersey Shore.”

<sup>180</sup> Their lives would have more epistemic value simply because they would contain more knowledge and they would contain more perfectionist value because of the “distinctively human capacities” that would be exercised in their coming to have that knowledge.

the life of the mechanic who values it and not to the mechanic who does not. To insist otherwise is to deny that what is prudentially good for an individual must give that individual motivating reasons for action, it is to reject any sort of “resonance” constraint on prudential value. That is, it is to fail to capture the subjective intuition and offer an alienating conception of an individual’s good; after all, the first mechanic has no positive orientation toward the alleged good under consideration, i.e. it resiliently leaves him entirely cold. The most plausible explanation of why this is the case is because of what each individual values; i.e. the mechanic who decides to undergo the course of study *values* the knowledge that he will get from it, the other does not. This explains why it is (prudentially) valuable for the former but not for the latter. Accordingly, it is not the fact that the mechanic will have a bit of knowledge that makes his life more prudentially valuable, it is the fact that he values having such knowledge.<sup>181</sup> That is, in gaining knowledge about how combustion engines work the mechanic realizes one of his values, e.g. gaining knowledge and a deeper understanding of his craft.

When it comes to the first mechanic, the one who is happy knowing the “how” but not the “why” of his craft, there are two ways in which a brute-list theorist (like Hurka) who maintains that knowledge is an objective prudential good which improves the quality of any individual’s life in which it is present, might diagnose this case. First, he might maintain that an individual’s possessing knowledge is prudentially valuable for that individual regardless of his or her orientation toward it; i.e. regardless of whether he desires, values, disdains, etc., that knowledge. Consequently,

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<sup>181</sup> At this point, a hedonist or a desire-satisfaction theorist could object and maintain that I am incorrect; it is because such knowledge would give him pleasure or because he desires it. For the time being one can simply think of me as offering an explanation of how well-being as self-realization can properly diagnose this case. Reasons for why it does so better than the preceding two theories are the subject of the next two chapters.

even though our first mechanic is entirely indifferent to the knowledge,<sup>182</sup> his having a particular token of knowledge (one type of objective prudential good) in his life is prudentially valuable for him. Again, such insensitivity to an individual's idiosyncratic makeup (and evaluative perspective) in defining what is "good for" that individual cannot capture the subjective intuition and offers an alienating conception of an individual's good. That is, what reason would the mechanic have to possess this good that leaves him entirely cold? His "good," at least according to a brute-list theorist, seems to not provide him with any motivating reasons for action.<sup>183</sup> Otherwise put, in maintaining that it is prudentially valuable for an individual to have some good in his or her life regardless of whether it leaves him entirely "cold,"<sup>184</sup> this approach fails to capture what I have offered as a central condition of normative adequacy for a theory of well-being: capturing the subjective intuition. Furthermore, even if one were inclined to concede that Hurka's brute-list theory is at least able to explain why the less inquisitive mechanic's life is *deprived* of some good to the extent that he lacks the bit of knowledge under consideration, this seems an odd evaluation of his level of well-being considering that he is entirely indifferent to the knowledge under consideration to the extent that were he to possess it, it would not contribute positively to the quality of his life<sup>185</sup> *for him*.

Second, one might maintain that in order for one to have knowledge "in one's life" such that it contributes to one's well-being one must have a particular attitude toward that knowledge, perhaps "appreciation" or "welcoming."<sup>186</sup> This, however,

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<sup>182</sup> One could even imagine him being hostile/antagonistic toward it because, for instance, he thinks that it will take him out of the "flow" that he finds in his work.

<sup>183</sup> I discussed why this is the case in section 1.1.0 where I discussed the nature of the reasons that a normatively adequate theory of well-being ought to provide individuals' with.

<sup>184</sup> I.e. without any pro-attitude or positive affective feeling.

<sup>185</sup> At least to the "lived experience" of his life. One might, I suppose, bite the bullet and say that how well an individual is faring need not impinge on the felt quality/experience of one's life.

<sup>186</sup> This is what many have called a "hybrid" account of prudential value/well-being. Such accounts maintain that in order for something to be prudentially valuable it must both be objectively valuable



does not seem like a particularly promising move for the case under consideration. That is, both mechanics *know* something, i.e. the chemical processes underlying why a combustion engine works, one simply values this knowledge while the other is, at best, indifferent. I submit that if there is a real difference in this case, i.e. a difference in each mechanic's level of well-being as a result of his possessing the knowledge under consideration, it seems most reasonable to conclude that this is in virtue of what each individual values. This is exactly what well-being as self-realization maintains and what Hurka's brute-list objective-list theory appears unable to appreciate.

At this point perhaps one might think that a brute-list theory can avoid the problems afflicting Hurka's account (i.e. worries about alienation and the failure to capture the subjective intuition) if it somehow acknowledges the importance of an individual's being positively oriented toward some putative good in order for that individual either to have/possess that good or because such a positive orientation is a constitutive element of that good. The next brute-list theorist I consider seeks to capture this very idea.

#### 2.2.4 *Guy Fletcher's New Start*

Like Hurka, Guy Fletcher offers a brute-list theory of well-being that espouses a locative analysis of "good-for." Realizing the theoretical challenges facing such approaches, Fletcher, to his credit, is particularly concerned with formulating a theory of prudential value that avoids offering an alienating conception of an individual's good. To this end he offers a brute-list theory that maintains that all of the items on his list of objective prudential goods have a pro-attitude as a constitutive part of them. More specifically, Fletcher has recently written a number of articles<sup>187</sup> within which

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and one must have a particular (positive) orientation toward it. I discuss such approaches later in the chapter.

<sup>187</sup> See, for example, Fletcher, G. (2013). A Fresh Start for the Objective-List Theory of Well-Being. *Utilitas*, 25(2), 206–220.

he defends a brute-list theory of well-being that he formulates against the backdrop of what he believes to be an important and useful distinction among theories of well-being. Fletcher follows Crisp in dividing the traditional taxonomy of theories of well-being - Hedonist, Desire-Satisfaction, and Objective-List theories - according to whether they are *enumerative* or *explanatory* theories of well-being. Like Crisp,<sup>188</sup> Fletcher holds that enumerative theories of well-being “specify *which things* are well-being enhancing” while explanatory theories “aim to explain *why* something enhances well-being.”<sup>189</sup> He argues that hedonist and objective-list theories are enumerative because they specify an informative list of contributors to well-being,<sup>190</sup> while desire-satisfaction theories are explanatory because they provide an account of the conditions under which something is good for someone, i.e. when something contributes to an individual’s well-being (namely, when it satisfies one of one’s desires). Otherwise put, hedonist and brute-list theories tell us which things are prudentially valuable while desire-satisfaction theories (and well-being as self-realization) tell us what it is for something to be prudentially valuable.

Fletcher employs Crisp’s taxonomy because he believes that appreciating that brute-list theories are enumerative as opposed to explanatory theories helps to undermine some of the reasons why theorists have rejected their viability as comprehensive theories of well-being. Specifically, he focuses upon three reasons that well-being theorists have rejected brute-list theories. First, because brute-list theories are thought to maintain that prudential value is “attitude-independent,” i.e. that something can be good for an individual regardless of that individual orientation toward that good, some well-being theorists have charged that they are elitist and/or

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Fletcher, G. (2013). The Locative Analysis of Good For Formulated and Defended. *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 6(1), 1–26.

<sup>188</sup> Crisp, R. (2008). *Reasons and the Good*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>189</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 206.

<sup>190</sup> Respectively, pleasure and desire-satisfaction.

autonomy violating.<sup>191</sup> The idea underlying the charge that brute-list theories are “elitist” is that they posit goods that are entirely out of an individual’s grasp,<sup>192</sup> so that large swathes of individuals end up living “deprived” lives. It is understandable that one might think that a theory of well-being that offers such verdicts is highly counter-intuitive and not theoretically viable. The criticism that brute-list theories are “autonomy violating” is rooted in the fact that brute-list theories can, at least in principle, posit as prudentially valuable goods which are wholly insensitive to individuals’ idiosyncratic makeups and evaluative perspectives concerning “the good life” and its constitutive elements. Accordingly, some think that brute-list theories’ stipulating that such goods are good for one regardless of what one desires, cares about, values, etc., seems to show some sort of disrespect for that individual. Fletcher argues against these charges by maintaining that all a brute-list theory does is provide a list of those (prudential) goods that contribute to an individual’s well-being. This, he asserts, is a purely *descriptive* task that does not have any *necessary normative* upshot(s), i.e. “what we should do with respect to those who do not care about or desire some element from the objective-list is a separate issue, one that all theories of well-being are agnostic on.”<sup>193</sup> In light of his insistence that his brute-list theory is silent on normative issues<sup>194</sup> Fletcher argues that his theory is neither autonomy violating nor is it elitist in virtue of the good it posits.

One then has the charge that brute-list theories do not appreciate, and cannot capture, the “attitude dependence” which many think is a hallmark of prudential

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<sup>191</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 210.

<sup>192</sup> Goods that are, for example, impossible for an individual to have in his life in light of his circumstances. Such goods might include “appreciating great works of art” or enjoying foods that are fine delicacies.

<sup>193</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 210.

<sup>194</sup> I.e. how one ought to treat individuals in virtue of the nature of their well-being.

value. That is, many well-being theorists<sup>195</sup> maintain that something can only contribute to an individual's well-being if that individual has some sort of pro-attitude (or orientation) toward it.<sup>196</sup> The worry for brute-list theories is that if they cannot capture attitude-dependence's putative centrality to prudential-value then this would undercut their viability as a comprehensive theory of well-being. Fletcher agrees that attitude dependence is an important aspect of prudential value, but he is careful to note that it is not a given how one ought to understand it. He considers two understandings of attitude dependence: (AD1) and (AD2), both of which he believes a brute-list theory can capture.<sup>197</sup> (AD1) holds that some good X cannot be good for someone unless they have a pro-attitude toward it, while (AD2) is the view that whether someone has some good "X" is dependent upon their pro-attitudes. Fletcher argues that brute-list theories can capture both (AD1) and (AD2) because there is nothing in principle preventing them from maintaining that some goods necessarily have a pro-attitude as a constitutive part of them. More specifically a brute-list theory could maintain, as Fletcher's does, that one does not "have" a particular good in one's life unless one has some sort of pro-attitude toward it because such pro-attitudes are a constitutive element of such goods. That is, one does not have this "good" in his life such that it contributes to his well-being unless he has some sort of pro-attitude toward it. For an example of this Fletcher offers "friendship." He maintains that given that friendship is at least partly constituted by positive attitudes "if someone has a friendship then that is something that is good for them and in the counterfactual situation where the person lacks the pro-attitudes that constitute friendship this good is absent."<sup>198</sup> Fletcher argues that by recognizing that the possession of certain goods

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<sup>195</sup> I.e. those with "subjectivist" tendencies or those who are interested "hybrid" theories of well-being.

<sup>196</sup> This is simply another way of capturing what lies behind the subjective intuition.

<sup>197</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 210-214.

<sup>198</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 6.

is, by nature, attitude dependent, a brute-list theory can respect (AD1) & (AD2) and be attitude dependent in the way in which many well-being theorists believe a theory of well-being/prudential value must be.<sup>199</sup>

In light of the preceding considerations, Fletcher argues that brute-list theories need not necessarily be either elitist or autonomy violating, and that they can capture prudential value's putative attitude-dependence. This being the case, Fletcher argues that the most viable projects for investigating the nature of well-being could proceed along two different routes. First, one might try to establish the truth of some *explanatory* theory, e.g. defend a desire-satisfaction or perfectionist theory of well-being. If such a theory were established, then it would demonstrate an important truth about the nature of well-being and would do so without having to provide an enumerative theory of well-being.<sup>200</sup> Second, one might attempt to develop and defend an enumerative theory, e.g. a brute-list theory of well-being. Such an account would offer a list of those goods which contribute to an individual's well-being without specifying *what it is about these goods*, i.e. what they have in common,<sup>201</sup> which makes them prudentially valuable. This is the route Fletcher pursues. To this end he offers a pluralist enumerative theory of well-being whose main virtue, he believes, is its ability to capture the major motivations which lie behind the most prominent explanatory theory, the desire-satisfaction theory: avoiding worries about alienation, without incurring that theory's drawbacks.

Fletcher's enumerative brute-list theory holds the following goods enhance individuals' well-being: "Achievement, Friendship, Happiness, Pleasure, Self-

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<sup>199</sup> Say, in order to capture the subjective intuition and avoid offering an alienating conception of an individual's good.

<sup>200</sup> This is the route that I take in advocating for well-being as self-realization.

<sup>201</sup> That is, providing an explanatory account of well-being.

Respect, Virtue.”<sup>202</sup> He believes that conceiving of well-being thusly has several theoretical strengths. First, he argues that his account avoids worries about “alienation.” That is, he recognizes that a large part of desire-satisfaction theories’ theoretical attractiveness lies in the fact that their account of prudential value is sensitive to individuals’ attitudes (i.e. orientation) toward putative goods in their lives. That is, desire-satisfaction theories appreciate the role that individuals’ evaluative perspectives plays in determining what is prudentially valuable for them; i.e. they recognize that something contributes to our well-being *because* of our orientation toward it. Put more simply, they capture the subjective intuition. Accordingly, Fletcher agrees with Railton that “it would be an intolerably alienating conception of someone’s good to imagine that it might fail in any way to engage him.”<sup>203</sup> As Fletcher rightly recognizes, and as I have argued, enumerative theories of well-being that posit that certain objective goods are prudentially valuable for an individual regardless of that individual’s orientation toward them raise serious worries about alienation. Fletcher argues that because his enumerative brute-list theory only posits goods which have a pro-attitude as a *constitutive* part of them he avoids offering an alienating conception of a person’s good because “everything on the list involves the person’s engagement through their holding various kinds of pro-attitudes such as endorsement, desires, and affection” so that “if one is experiencing these kinds of states of engagement, one is doing well (and vice versa)” and “if one is not experiencing them one is not doing well” (and vice versa).<sup>204</sup>

Before exploring the problems facing Fletcher’s brute-list theory, I want to take a moment to discuss the relationship between a theory of well-being’s capturing the subjective intuition and its courting worries about alienation. It is important to

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<sup>202</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 219.

<sup>203</sup> Railton, (1999).

<sup>204</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 216.

appreciate that even if a brute-list theory like Fletcher's is able to avoid worries about alienation, say, by maintaining that the items on its objective-list have pro-attitudes as a constitutive part of them, this *does not* thereby ensure that the theory will capture the subjective intuition. Again, the subjective intuition is the idea that what is good for an individual depends upon what that individual is like.<sup>205</sup> Stipulating that the goods on one's brute-list have pro-attitudes as a constitutive part of them will not ensure that one's theory captures the subjective intuition for two reasons. First, an individual's well-being, by his own lights, might be contributed to by something that is not on the list. Imagine, for example, a religious hermit who believes that his life is more prudentially valuable to the extent that he is able to quietly contemplate god's nature in complete solitude. Such a life seems to lack some of the putative objective goods that Fletcher lists. Now, imagining that the hermit does not quietly contemplate God's nature because it he gets pleasure out of it or is made happy by it, his activity, which he derives his well-being from, is not captured by Fletcher's brute-list. Further, unless one's list is quite long (and possibly ad-hoc) the preceding counter-example is not an isolated example, one can imagine that there are many "idiosyncratic" activities, states of affairs, experiences, etc. which might contribute particular individuals' well-being. Second, some of the items on one's list may simply not contribute to an individual's well-being because of what one is like. Further, they may in fact detract from the quality of that individual's life<sup>206</sup> or one's list might be missing some "weird" good that contribute positively to the lives of several (highly) idiosyncratic individuals. Accordingly, even if Fletcher's stipulating only goods that putatively have pro-attitudes as a constitutive part of them allows him to avoid

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<sup>205</sup> I.e. it depends upon their idiosyncratic makeup.

<sup>206</sup> I provide an example of this when considering "achievement," p. 77-80

offering an alienating conception of an individuals' well-being, this does not necessarily ensure that his theory will capture the subjective intuition.

Before getting to my objections to Fletcher's account and my reasons for maintaining that well-being as self-realization is a superior account of prudential value, there are two major objections to Fletcher's account which he preemptively responds to: that it does not get the details of the objective-list correct<sup>207</sup> or that it is "arbitrary" in some problematic way.<sup>208</sup> In response to the latter objection Fletcher argues that when it comes to the question of how one goes about determining what is on one's objective-list<sup>209</sup> without inviting the charge that one's account is arbitrary, the other major theories of well-being can be objected to on similar grounds. That is, one could press hedonist theories about why pleasure is the only thing that is good for someone, desire-fulfillment theories about why the fulfillment of our desires contributes to our well-being, or question human nature perfectionist theories about what it is exactly that is so special about human nature that makes its perfection prudentially valuable. While Fletcher concedes that more explanatory depth is preferable to less, he notes that all explanations must end somewhere so that "one cannot say that in the absence of further justification for the things on the list that the theory is troublingly arbitrary, for a similar objection could be mounted against all of the other things."<sup>210</sup> That being said, it ought to be noted that desire-satisfaction theories, in being *explanatory* theories of well-being, give us *significantly* more explanatory depth than, say, brute-list theories. Desire-satisfaction theorists appeal, for instance, to desire's "intentionality" or "pro-attitudinal" nature when arguing why desires are a prime candidate for what has intrinsic prudential value. This, at the very

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<sup>207</sup> I.e. that it only has the right things on the list and only those things. This is very similar to the objections I just raised.

<sup>208</sup> I.e. if the source of the items on the list is arbitrary.

<sup>209</sup> I.e. what the items on the list are.

<sup>210</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 214.



least, makes desire-satisfaction theories more “immune” to the arbitrariness objection than brute-list theories. Well-being as self-realization is similarly explanatorily preferable. That is, it draws upon the intuition that an individual’s values are strongly tied to his identity, including those things that matter most to his life, so that it is intuitively plausible that these values’ realization contributes to his well-being.

Despite arguing that other theories of well-being are just as challenged by the “arbitrariness objection” as is his brute-list theory, Fletcher does acknowledge the truth laying at the heart of it: it is a difficult task to discover what is intrinsically prudentially valuable or, in his case, what belongs on one’s brute-list. He believes, however, that there are some things that one can do in order to test whether the goods on one’s list are in fact prudentially valuable. Fletcher considers two tests that one might employ in order to test one’s brute-list: “tests for absences,” i.e. tests concerning whether a brute-list is missing any objective goods, and “tests for errors,” i.e. tests concerning whether the list includes anything that ought not be there.<sup>211</sup> For the former test Fletcher proposes that one follow a method similar to the one that Crisp employs when he considers the “anhedonic achiever.”<sup>212</sup> That is, he imagines two individuals who possess identical bundles of goods and imagines that one of these individuals has an “objective good” under consideration added to his life. If we find it plausible to think that individual’s level of well-being is thereby made higher than the other’s, then, Fletcher argues, this is evidence that one should expand one’s brute-list to include this item.<sup>213</sup>

I think that Fletcher’s “tests for absences” is flawed because to the extent that it ignores individuals’ idiosyncratic makeup (including their evaluative perspective(s)) it risks offering an alienating conception of individuals’ good.

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<sup>211</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 218

<sup>212</sup> Crisp, R., 2006: p. 122-23.

<sup>213</sup> Fletcher, 2013: p. 218.

Accordingly, employing this test as Fletcher describes it will likely provide one with a theory of well-being that cannot capture the subjective intuition. Again, consider the example with the two mechanics and the knowledge concerning why a combustion engine works.<sup>214</sup> If one is sympathetic to my diagnosis of this case, then, as that case demonstrated, one can only determine whether a “putative” good would contribute to an individual’s well-being if one knows what the individual’s orientation is (or would be) toward that good, e.g. whether that individual values (or would value) it. More specifically, only once one knows whether or not an individual would value a putative good can one know whether his having that good in his life (thereby realizing that value) would contribute to his well-being. Without this knowledge one might stipulate that something is good for an individual that that individual is alienated from, thereby failing to capture the subjective intuition. Accordingly, what Fletcher’s “test for absences” really ought to be understood as testing for is whether an individual does/could value a *putative* good.

Setting aside Fletcher’s proposed tests, I want to examine his claim that his brute-list theory is theoretically attractive because it can capture the attitude-dependence which many think is a hallmark of prudential value. More specifically, Fletcher maintains that one cannot have any of the goods from his brute-list “in one’s life” unless one has the pro-attitude toward that good which he believes is constitutive of it. There are, I believe, several rather commonplace scenarios where this simply does not seem to be the case. That is, one can easily imagine cases in which it appears that one can have an “objective good” from Fletcher’s list in one’s life without one’s possessing a pro-attitude toward it. In these cases the possession of these putative goods does not contribute positively to one’s well-being. The fact that such cases are

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<sup>214</sup> See page 51.

easily imagined lends support to the criticism that Fletcher either did not get the particulars of his brute-list correct or, and this is my view, that he fundamentally misunderstands the nature of our well-being and what is prudentially valuable for us. Otherwise put, considering that some of the items on his list neither have pro-attitudes as a constitutive element of them nor do they appear to necessarily contribute to the well-being of an individual's life in which they are present, it seems reasonable to question whether Fletcher got the list right and, more importantly, whether providing such a list is the most viable way of offering a theoretically and normatively adequate account of our well-being.

The first item from Fletcher's list I consider is "pleasure."<sup>215</sup> The following case demonstrates that there are instances in which an individual experiences pleasure<sup>216</sup> yet this pleasure does not seem to contribute to that individual's well-being. Taking an example which, unfortunately, is not far from reality, imagine an individual in the military whose job is to use "enhanced interrogation techniques" on enemy combatants. That is, he tortures people. Now imagine that when he reflects upon it, this soldier does not want to be torturing people. He does it because he is good at it and because his superiors order him to do it. Further, not only does our soldier not believe that torturing enemy combatants is right, say, because he believes in the Geneva conventions, he is apprehensive in those instances in which he is ordered to torture someone because when he is extracting information out of an individual he gets *pleasure* out of it. That is, while he is torturing an individual he both "feels good" and experiences higher order delights in the intricacies of the task at

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<sup>215</sup> While I do not consider the issue here (it gets fuller treatment in the next chapter), there are several ways in which one can understand the nature of "pleasure."

<sup>216</sup> I.e. has a token of the objective good pleasure "in his life."

hand.<sup>217</sup> That being said, despite the fact that our soldier does not want to be torturing people, he is neither haunted nor deeply troubled by his having done so because he is able to rationalize his actions by thinking that he is “just doing his duty.” This, however, does not change the fact that he wishes that he were not ordered to do so. Finally, were he were given the choice, the soldier would be rid of the pleasure he feels when torturing prisoners.

I maintain that the instances in which our interrogator experiences pleasure while he is torturing a prisoner does not contribute to his well-being. This is because it (the pleasure) is something that is, in an important way, “external” to him; i.e. he experiences it as being “alien” to him and is, accordingly, alienated from it. In fact, I would go so far as to say that it is not as properly attributable to him as, say, his aversion to it is. That is, it is something he has reflected upon and rejected as part of his identity (*qua* person), it is an experience and activity that he does not value. Accordingly, I offer his case as a counter-example to Fletcher’s claim that “pleasure” is an objective good whose presence in an individual’s life contributes to that individual’s well-being. That is, the interrogator seems to present us with a case in which an individual who putatively has one of Fletcher’s objective goods, i.e. pleasure, in his life without his life being made any better for it, at least from his evaluative perspective.<sup>218</sup>

There are, I believe, two responses that Fletcher<sup>219</sup> might make in response to my putative counter-example. First, he might bite the bullet and concede that despite

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<sup>217</sup> I.e. he appreciates the complexities (e.g. sensitivities, intellectual and physical demands, etc.) involved in breaking prisoners.

<sup>218</sup> One might argue, for instance, that my diagnosis of this case is incorrect because a life with torture and pleasure is better than a life that simply contains torture. Again, I reject this verdict on the grounds that the soldier has rejected that part of his identity that experiences pleasure at torturing individuals. That is, he devalues it. This makes it such that the life with torture and pleasure is actually worse than the life with just torture: it contains two things, as opposed to just one (i.e. torture) that an individual devalues.

<sup>219</sup> Or a theory similar to his.

the fact that the interrogator wishes that he did not experience pleasure as he tortures individuals, and would change if he could,<sup>220</sup> he does have an objective good in his life his level of well-being is higher for it. After all, “pleasure” is an objective good and it is “in his life.” Fletcher may, however, attempt to allay worries about this verdict, say, because he realizes that it raises the very alienation worries that his approach was designed to avoid, in a couple different ways. First, he might insist that while the pleasure the interrogator experiences while torturing a prisoner is prudentially valuable, its value is “swamped” by the prudential disvalue the torture has because of its viciousness.<sup>221</sup> That is, one has two conflicting goods, pleasure and virtue, and the latter’s value simply swamps the value of the former. Second, Fletcher might argue that because the interrogator dreads (and wishes he was rid of) the pleasure that he feels when he tortures an individual he lacks the pro-attitude which is constitutive of pleasure so that what he experiences when he tortures someone ought not be properly considered a token of the objective good “pleasure.”<sup>222</sup> The problem with this response is that it seems to ignore the “pleasantness” of the feelings that the interrogator experiences as he tortures a prisoner. That is, if what the interrogator is experiencing when he tortures prisoners is not pleasure then what exactly is it? One can easily imagine that he may feel both the ineffable “warm” feelings and sensations that many hold to be a defining characteristic of pleasure while also enjoying the task at hand, i.e. the intricacies involved in breaking another person physically, mentally, and emotionally.<sup>223</sup> Put more bluntly, what the interrogator experiences as he tortures

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<sup>220</sup> Or, as I would put it, he does not value the pleasure he experiences when he tortures individuals.

<sup>221</sup> Granted this assumes that our interrogator sees the torture as “vicious” (and has con-attitude toward it). This, however, is not simply a given; i.e. his negative view of the torture may simply be a “gut-level” reaction (say, he does not like the sight of blood or finds loud screams to be strident).

<sup>222</sup> This sidesteps this issues surrounding whether pleasure ought to be understood according to a “sensation” or “attitudinal” model of it.

<sup>223</sup> That is, he may experience both “sensational” and “attitudinal” forms of pleasure. I consider each of these in depth in the following chapter.

a prisoner sure looks a whole lot like what we typically call “pleasure.” What’s more, this might be what lies behind the dread he feels before the act. Relatedly, the fact that certain individuals take pleasure in what many of us consider to be reprehensible acts may be what lies behind the reaction we have toward “evil” individuals who take pleasure in doing bad things: not only are they doing bad things, they are experiencing pleasure as they do them, thereby making their lives better for them, and we resent them and their behavior all the more so because of it.<sup>224</sup> Insofar as the interrogator has an objective good like pleasure in his life, a brute-list theorist who, like Fletcher, maintains that pleasure is objectively prudentially valuable, is committed to the interrogator’s well-being being enhanced by the pleasure he feels while torturing people despite the fact that he wishes he did not feel such pleasure and would be rid of this personal trait if it were possible. That is, despite the fact that he does not value this pleasure. Considering that such cases<sup>225</sup> seem eminently possible, Fletcher cannot avoid the alienation worries that he is (rightly) sensitive to. In contrast, I maintain that because of the interrogator’s idiosyncratic and evaluative makeup, i.e. his devaluing the pleasure he experiences when he tortures people, it does not contribute to his well-being *qua* person.

If one shares my intuition that the pleasure the interrogator experiences while torturing prisoners does not contribute to his well-being, then one ought to be inclined toward well-being as self-realization because it is extremely well-suited to explain why the interrogator’s well-being is not positively contributed to by the pleasure he experiences when he tortures prisoners. Simply put, the reason that the pleasure that he gets from this activity is not prudentially valuable is because he does not value

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<sup>224</sup> I explore this issue in depth in chapters three when I consider Fred Feldman’s “attitudinal hedonism.”

<sup>225</sup> I.e. cases in which an individual has an objective good in his life, yet this good does not appear at all prudentially valuable.

it.<sup>226</sup> In particular, he has rejected the part of his identity that he feels as he tortures people. Furthermore, the scenario as described lends itself to this diagnosis: the interrogator has reflected upon the pleasure he feels when he tortures people, wishes that he did not feel this pleasure, and, as a result, he has rejected this aspect of his psychological makeup as being “alien” to him, it is not something he values. Consequently, the pleasure he experiences when he tortures prisoners does not realize one of his values; in fact, it frustrates one of them: his valuing not being the sort of individual who experiences pleasure while torturing people.<sup>227</sup> That is, he, like many of us, values being a certain sort of person. This case demonstrates that Fletcher is mistaken in maintaining that pleasure has a pro-attitude as a necessary constituent of it. Further, it shows that for some individuals, pleasure does not contribute to their well-being and that this is a function of what they value.

Another item from Fletcher’s list, “achievement,” also seems to neither have a pro-attitude as a constituent element of it nor does it necessarily contribute positively to the prudential value of any life in which it is present. Imagine, for example, a young child who casually enjoys playing the piano. Now, one of the child’s parents sees this interest and thinks that it would be in the child’s best interest<sup>228</sup> to master the piano, thinking that such mastery would help the child in school, improve their test scores, or may simply be intrinsically valuable. To this end the parent endlessly drills his or her child to perfect a difficult piano concerto and pushes him to master it even when (especially when) the child loses interest in playing from fatigue, frustration, lack of interest, etc. Finally, as a teenager, the child loses the passion and interest he

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<sup>226</sup> I.e. it is not one of his values.

<sup>227</sup> One can easily imagine scenarios in which his torturing individual’s realizes one of his values: namely imagine a scenario in which he is a patriotic sadist. In this case, not only would the soldier think he is doing the right thing he would feel more than justified in taking pleasure in doing it.

<sup>228</sup> I.e. that the child would be prudentially better off.

had in playing the piano right as he finally masters the piece that he had spent years working on.

I maintain that the preceding case is an instance in which an individual has achieved something, i.e. has achievement in his life, yet this achievement lacks prudential value. The reasons for this are obvious. It is, for instance, easy to imagine that this child cannot think about his accomplishment without being filled with resentment toward his overbearing parent(s) and regrets the time he wasted playing the piano, time which would have been spent pursuing other activities. Now, unless one thinks that this individual's resentment and regret renders his mastering a difficult piano piece no longer an achievement (which seems highly dubious), then it appears that one can achieve something<sup>229</sup> and yet not benefit prudentially from that achievement. That is unless one thinks that the child has prudentially benefited from his achievement despite the fact that he is entirely alienated from it. This, however, simply invites the worries about alienation that Fletcher is so concerned with avoiding.

The preceding appears to be another case in which one can have one of Fletcher's objective goods in one's life without one's having the pro-attitude which he believes is constitutive of this good and which allows his theory to avoid worries about alienation. Further, unless Fletcher has an idiosyncratic understanding of "achievement" which would rule out the preceding sorts of cases,<sup>230</sup> then his assertion that his list of objective prudential goods which, he believes, have pro-attitudes as a necessary constituent of them, is false. This is particularly important because Fletcher's brute-list theory was supposed to avoid worries about alienation by

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<sup>229</sup> Thereby having a token of "achievement," an objective prudential good, in his life.

<sup>230</sup> He might maintain, for instance, that not only does one need to work and strive toward something in order for it to be a token of the general good "achievement," one also needs to have a pro-attitude toward it.



stipulating that the prudential goods on his list have pro-attitudes as a constitutive part of them. The preceding considerations, and the final case I offer, cast serious doubt on this.

Finally, consider a more “extreme,” and perhaps controversial example of a scenario in which it appears that an individual has achieved something yet this achievement neither has a pro-attitude as a constitutive part of it nor does it possess prudential value for the individual in whose life it is present. Consider the slaves who constructed the Great Pyramid of Giza or those who built the Great Wall of China. I do not think that it is stretching credulity to stipulate that these individuals did not have an autonomous positive orientation, i.e. attitude, desire, valuing etc., toward which they were building. That being said, would one want to deny that these individuals achieved something as they helped to construct some of the world’s wonders? Hardly. In fact, I maintain that they accomplished something without their having any positive orientation toward their achievement. While their achievement might give their lives more *perfectionist* value, after all they exercised and developed some of their capacities in performing these grueling tasks, it did not contribute to the prudential value of their lives, i.e. its value *for them*. They were *forced*, under awful conditions, to perform the tasks that brought about this achievement. Or, more simply, they did not value their achievement; it was something they were forced to do under the threat of the lash of a whip or something worse. This is what lies behind its not positively contributing to the prudential value of their lives. Like the earlier case, this example shows that an individual can have an item on Fletcher’s brute-list in his life without having any sort of pro-attitude toward it (thereby raising worries about alienation) and without this putative good contributing positively to the quality of that individual’s life. Further, the presence of one of these putative goods may even

greatly detract from the quality of that individual's life.<sup>231</sup> In contrast, well-being as self-realization can explain why the preceding instances of achievement do not positively contribute to the individuals' lives in which they are present: these individuals do not *value* their accomplishments. In contrast, were the child who finally mastered the piano concerto to value his achievement he would see his mastery as the culmination of years of hard work and value and cherish all of that work's paying off as he plays a piece he or she has mastered. As such his accomplishment would contribute positively to the quality of his life.<sup>232</sup> Again, this is a function of what he values.

The preceding considerations bolster the objection that Fletcher's theory does not pass the "test for errors," i.e. his brute-list theory does not get the right items on the list. Again, this is because the items on his list neither have a pro-attitude as a constitutive part of them nor do they contribute to an individual's well-being in whose life they are present. In addition, Fletcher's proposed "test of absences" might not prove what he wants it to prove. While Fletcher *thinks* that this test can be used to determine which unique goods belong on the brute-list of objective prudential goods, what it *actually* tests for (and demonstrates) is whether or not an individual *values* something and, accordingly, whether or not it contributes to that individual's well-being. Again consider the case involving the two (nearly identical) mechanics and the knowledge of why an engine works. There *is* an absence in this case, but it is not the absence of an objective good, knowledge, which would contribute to any individual's

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<sup>231</sup> As my "achievement" cases demonstrate.

<sup>232</sup> It is worth noting that Fletcher also considers it to be an advantage of his brute-list theory that it can avoid one of desire-satisfaction views' greatest theoretical challenges: the scope problem. Fletcher argues that his brute-list theory can avoid the scope problem because it is "attitude sensitive without giving attitudes a role over and above being necessary constituents of the states that are good for us." (Fletcher, 2013: p. 281) That is, in contrast to desire-satisfaction theories which hold that our attitude can play a sufficient role in determining what is good for us, he only stipulated that our desires play a necessary role. Accordingly, he believes that his enumerative theory captures a major attraction of desire-fulfillment theories, attitude sensitivity, without courting the problems faced by desire-fulfillment theories.

life in which it was present. What is absent is an individual's relating to a potential aspect of his idiosyncratic makeup in an important way: his valuing knowledge. Accordingly, what tests for absences *actually* test for is whether or not an individual values something and, consequently, whether or not the realizing that value contributes to his well-being.

### 2.2.5 Griffin's "Profile of Prudential Values"

The next brute-list theorist I consider is James Griffin whose theory of well-being is most clearly articulated in his "General Profile of Prudential Values" which appears in his book *Value Judgments: Improving Our Ethical Beliefs*<sup>233</sup> along with chapter four of his *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measure, and Moral Importance*,<sup>234</sup> "Perfectionism and the Ends of Life."<sup>235</sup> Griffin offers a brute-list theory of well-being whose constituents can be derived, he argues, through what he calls "prudential deliberation," i.e. deliberation concerning whether some putative good is (in fact) prudentially valuable. Relatedly, he maintains that there are two different models for understanding the nature of prudential value judgments:<sup>236</sup> the "perception" and "taste" models. Griffin ultimately endorses the perception model because he believes that in order for us to see anything as prudentially valuable "we must see it as an instance of something generally intelligible as valuable and, furthermore, as valuable for any (normal) human."<sup>237</sup> Accordingly, Griffin's conception of prudential value shares some similarities with those theories of well-being, e.g. Perfectionist and Eudaimonist theories, whose account of prudential value appeals to our "human nature."

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<sup>233</sup> Griffin, J. (1996). *Value Judgment: Improving Our Ethical Beliefs*. Clarendon Press.

<sup>234</sup> Griffin, J. (1989). *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance*. Oxford University Press, USA.

<sup>235</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 29.

<sup>236</sup> I.e. judgments concerning which goods are prudentially valuable.

<sup>237</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 29.

Griffin brute-list is comprised of the following list<sup>238</sup> of “impersonal values”: accomplishment, the components of human existence, understanding, enjoyment, and deep personal relationships.<sup>239</sup> He is careful to emphasize, however, that the mere fact that he offers an *objective*-list of prudential goods does not mean that his theory is insensitive to individuals’ differences. He maintains, for instance, that while the values, i.e. objective goods, he offers are (prudentially) valuable in any (human) life in which they are present, “individual differences matter, not to the content of the profile, but to how, or how much, or even whether, a particular person can realize one or another particular value.” Griffin offers, for example, that one might *enjoy* rock climbing while another person may *enjoy* knitting.<sup>240</sup> Despite such activities’ notable differences, Griffin maintains they ought only be considered as being prudentially valuable because they are subsumable under the general rubric of “enjoyment,” a basic (objective) human good. More abstractly, Griffin believes that all of our reasoning about the nature of prudential value takes place within a broad framework of a set of prudential values that apply to all humans (in virtue of their being human).<sup>241</sup> Despite this, Griffin is careful to note “there being just one profile of prudential values for humans is compatible with there being very many forms that a good human life could take.”<sup>242</sup> Finally Griffin believes that because autonomy is morally important, the fact that there is just one (correct) profile of prudential goods is compatible with respect for considerably less than the best form of life.

I want to take a moment to consider Griffin’s last point. This point is worth discussing because it speaks to a popular line of thought pressed by several objective-

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<sup>238</sup> Griffin is careful to note, however, that the list is (most likely) incomplete. Recognizing this does not, however, undermine my criticisms of his account because my issue with him is not whether he merely got the details of his list correct.

<sup>239</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 29-30.

<sup>240</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 30.

<sup>241</sup> I.e. in virtue of their being members of the class “humanity.”

<sup>242</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 31.

list theorists. There are two prominent ways in which objective-list theorists' attempt to explain/explain away autonomy's importance to our well-being. First, as we saw with Fletcher, many objective-list theorists are sensitive to the fact that their theories may be perceived as "autonomy violating" because they stipulate that certain things are good for an individual (i.e. the items on their objective-list of goods) regardless of that individual's orientation toward them (e.g. regardless of whether an individual desires, values, etc., them). Fletcher's response to this was to insist that formulating a brute-list theory of well-being is a purely descriptive task with no necessary normative upshot. Other theorists, like Griffin, stipulate that "autonomy" is one of the items on the list of objective prudential goods and that despite the fact that there is *one* objective-list one ought to respect autonomous individual's choices. The latter response is, I believe, misguided because autonomy's importance to our well-being is not merely manifest in (or limited in relevance to) the fact that one ought to respect "considerably less than the best form(s) of life." Our capacity for autonomy, and exercises of it, shape and define our idiosyncratic/evaluative makeup qua person, including the constituents of our well-being: our values. An important upshot of this is that "autonomy" cannot merely be one item on the list among several other objective goods. An individual's capacity for autonomy is constitutive of his identity *qua* person and exercises of it can shape and define a person's relationship to other *putative* prudential goods. Relatedly, any theory that stipulates that our well-being consists in *one* profile of prudential values is going to have trouble capturing the subjective intuition.

In light of the preceding considerations, there are two serious flaws with Griffin's account of prudential value. First, his claim that something ought not be considered prudentially valuable unless one can subsume it under some "general

human value,” is not simply a given. Defending this claim would likely require an account of human nature.<sup>243</sup> Providing such an account faces a dilemma. Either Griffin offers a relatively concrete, i.e. well-defined and specific<sup>244</sup> conception of human nature, motivations, and values, which, in virtue of its appeal to class-membership<sup>245</sup> and the generalities that accompany such an appeal, will have trouble capturing the subjective intuition and thereby court worries about alienation. Or, he conceives of “general human value” broadly enough so that it can capture the extremely wide array of things that humans<sup>246</sup> find prudentially valuable,<sup>247</sup> in which case it is likely to be so broad as to be uninformative. Second, if my account of our well-being *qua* person (as consisting in self-realization) is theoretically attractive and persuasive, then there is reason to doubt Griffin’s claim that there are only “impersonal” (prudential) values. That is, there is good reason to think that an individual’s values, i.e. that which defines an individual’s identity *qua* person, are paradigmatic “personal (prudential) values.” Accordingly, what is prudentially valuable for an individual need not be either a general human value or subsumable under some general human value(s). Instead, what is prudentially valuable for a person is paradigmatically *personal* in that it is essentially related to an individual’s *idiosyncratic* makeup.<sup>248</sup> As I have argued, this approach is ideally suited to capture the subjective intuition, avoid worries about alienation, and capture nuances in our experiences of putative deprivations.<sup>249</sup> That being said, Griffin’s account still

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<sup>243</sup> Along with an account of why one ought to think that this account of human nature is prudentially authoritative.

<sup>244</sup> And a possibly (likely?) idiosyncratic.

<sup>245</sup> I.e. species-membership

<sup>246</sup> Or a suitably large percentage of humans.

<sup>247</sup> Griffin would need to do this so that his theory could, for example, avoid charges that it is “elitist” or “autonomy violating.”

<sup>248</sup> And, as the case might be, evaluative perspective.

<sup>249</sup> I demonstrate this on pages 117-120.

deserves close consideration because it further demonstrates some of the challenges that brute-list theories face as they attempt to explain the nature of prudential value.

Again, Griffin maintains that there are two predominant models for understanding prudential value: the taste and perception models. He proposes that one can test the viability of these models by considering a putative prudential value, e.g. achievement, and investigating which model best captures its prudential value. According to the perception model, one would test achievement's putative prudential value by isolating it from other putative values and non-values in order to bring its nature into focus so that it is clearly understood such that one is in a position to decide whether or not it is indeed prudentially valuable.<sup>250</sup> Griffin believes that this exercise is one of *discovery* in that it involves one's isolating a particular (putative) value from other values and considering it apart from any particular individual's idiosyncratic makeup in order to *see* whether it appears, and as-a-matter-of-fact-is, prudentially valuable for humans in general and ought to be judged as such. Accordingly, the perception model of prudential value gives priority to an individual's judgments of value such that an individual desires a putative good because that individual judges it to in fact be valuable.

In contrast, the taste model of prudential value gives priority to an individual's desires, holding that something is prudentially valuable for an individual *because* it is desired. This model, as opposed to the perception model, seems well-suited to explain the putative prudential value of things like "enjoyment." That is, enjoyment is typically taken to be prudentially valuable, yet what each individual enjoys is dependent upon that individual's idiosyncratic makeup. Accordingly, when it comes to what particular individuals enjoy, there does not seem to be any judgments of

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<sup>250</sup> This is the same sort of test that Fletcher and Crisp employ when considering the "anhedonic achiever."

objective prudential value involved. Otherwise put, something's being a token instance of "enjoyment" and good for the person whose life it is in is not the result of an individual's perceiving or judging something as being objectively prudentially valuable. Instead, what each of us enjoys or desires and, consequently, what is *good for us* can be radically different from one person to another. Ultimately then, the taste model of prudential value reverses the priority found in the perception model: one values something because one desires it.

Griffin endorses the perception model and rejects the taste model for several reasons. First, he argues that basing a theory of well-being upon individuals' *actual* desires<sup>251</sup> is a non-starter.<sup>252</sup> His reasons for this are similar to the reason that many well-being theorists reject desire-satisfaction theories of well-being: individuals' getting what they actually desire<sup>253</sup> often fails to make them better off.<sup>254</sup> In fairness, many desire-satisfaction theorists are sensitive to this fact and stipulate that it is not an individual's *actual* desires that contribute to his well-being, but only his rational, informed, or otherwise *corrected* desires.<sup>255</sup> Despite this, Griffin argues that even with these modifications the taste model of prudential value still makes three significant mistakes: it does not make the standards for a desire's being "rational" strong enough to explain value, it supplies no adequate account of progress in prudential deliberation, and it assumes that we can isolate valued objects in purely natural terms and then, independently, react to them with approval or disapproval. In regards to the last reason, Griffin insists that there is no adequate explanation of things having

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<sup>251</sup> I.e. their tastes.

<sup>252</sup> As we will see in chapter four, well-being as self-realization can be formulated as an "actualist" theory of well-being so, clearly, I do not think that such approaches are a non-starter.

<sup>253</sup> I.e. what their "tastes" incline them toward.

<sup>254</sup> I.e. improve their level of well-being.

<sup>255</sup> I explore these issues in depth in chapter four.



desirability features without one's appealing to certain general natural human motivations.<sup>256</sup>

Griffin takes the upshot of the preceding considerations to be that prudential value cannot be grounded in individuals' *mere* tastes and corresponding desires. In addition, he argues that one cannot understand what is happening in our investigations into the nature of prudential value, e.g. during prudential deliberation, without appreciating that there are certain volitional elements at play so that "there is no adequate explanation of their being desirability features without appeal to certain natural human motivations."<sup>257</sup> While I agree with Griffin that there are volitional elements at play when determining what is prudentially valuable for some person, I maintain that he is wrong about the particular role that these elements play. In particular, it is the exercise of our volitional capacities, e.g. self-consciousness and a disposition for answerability that allows us to be autonomous in relation to particular aspects of our idiosyncratic makeup<sup>258</sup> and allows us to shape and define what is prudentially valuable for us. It is also worth noting that even if Griffin were correct that prudential value cannot be grounded in an individual's *mere* tastes, it would leave untouched my own view: that prudential value is grounded in an individual's values (i.e. those aspects of his identity which he is autonomous in relation to) and that an individual's values define his idiosyncratic makeup *qua* person. Further, it ought to be clear by now that I would not consider an individual's *mere* tastes to count as values. That is, while an individual's values might arise out of his mere tastes, once an individual is autonomous in relation to them they are something he values and part of his idiosyncratic makeup *qua* person. Importantly, defining the constituents of an

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<sup>256</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 22-25.

<sup>257</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 25.

<sup>258</sup> Through, for example, our explicit judgments about these aspects, i.e. whether we endorse and identify with or reject them.

individual's well-being in terms of that individual's values makes no reference to general human motivations, yet this approach, i.e. well-being as self-realization, is able to explain desirability features. That is, it is able to explain how we isolate objects, states of affairs, etc., in purely natural terms and independently react to them with approval or disapproval, depending, of course, upon what an individual values. Accordingly, an appeal to our identity *qua* person can explain "desirability features" without a problematic appeal to "natural human motivations," thereby avoiding the dilemma discussed above.<sup>259</sup>

The chief similarity that well-being as self-realization shares with Griffin's view is that an individual's judgments can play<sup>260</sup> an important role in defining and shaping the constituents of that individual's well-being. Our views (significantly) differ, however, in that I do not restrict what can be prudentially valuable to those things that are subsumable under "general human values" and in the role that we believe prudential judgments play. An individual's judgments can play an important role in his self-realization because an individual's endorsing (or rejecting) some aspect of his idiosyncratic makeup or identifying with it (thereby making it one of his values) is often the result of some sort of judgment regarding it. In contrast, Griffin appears to maintain that individuals' judgments seek (or aim) to *correctly* recognize those values (i.e. goods) whose prudential value is grounded in their being subsumable under some general human interest or motivation.<sup>261</sup> More specifically, his (perception) model of prudential value holds that an individual forms a desire for a

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<sup>259</sup> I.e. an account of "natural human motivations" is likely to either have to be broad enough so that it can capture all of the ways in which our lives can be contributed to positively, or, it will be specific to the extent that it offers an alienating conception of individuals' good which fails to capture the subjective intuition.

<sup>260</sup> Again, unlike "thicker" conceptions of autonomy, I do not think that they must.

<sup>261</sup> It ought to be noted that this might merely amount to a conceptual difference between Griffin and myself. Our list of those things that contribute to an individual's well-being might be extensionally equivalent (or close to it). That being said, his account faces conceptual difficulties that mine does not.

putative good as a result of his judging and recognizing that that good is in fact prudentially valuable. I find it problematic that the nature of such recognition is left vague. That is, what exactly is one recognizing? Something's being subsumable under a general human value? What does that look like in practice? In contrast, it is a theoretical virtue of well-being as self-realization that it requires no such "recognition." That is, it need not posit that individuals can recognize which putative goods are in fact prudentially valuable for us because they are subsumable under some general human value, judge them as such, and thereby form a desire for them. Instead, persons, through their autonomous activity, e.g. being disposed to be answerable for their values, play an active role in defining and shaping the constituents of their well-being such that things in the world are prudentially valuable for them in virtue of the role they play in individuals' self-realization.<sup>262</sup> Accordingly, something is prudentially valuable not because it satisfies an individual's mere desire(s), but because it furthers an individual's self-realization by realizing his values.

While Griffin rejects the idea that an individual's *mere* desires do not settle what is prudentially valuable for that individual, he believes that the nature of prudential deliberation is such that *judgments* of prudential value take precedence over an individual's desires. Further, he recognizes that in addition to humans' particular desires differing dramatically so does the nature of those desires. On the one hand, there are those desires which we, as self-conscious, reflective, and autonomous persons experience as being "afflictions," e.g. cravings, obsessions, compulsions, addictions, etc. These are those desires that, upon reflection, we neither endorse nor do we think their fulfillment would be good (i.e. prudentially valuable for

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<sup>262</sup> Not in virtue of their being subsumable under some "general human value."

us). On the other hand, there are those desires which are part of an individual's normal intentional actions and which an individual is autonomous in relation to, say, because he has reflected upon and endorsed as being "internal" to him or which he is disposed to be answerable for; these desires are what I have called an individual's "values." Griffin describes persons' relationship to the latter sort of desires thusly, "an agent's normal behavior is to recognize interests and to act to meet them. Such desires fail on their own terms if they do not aim at something that seems good; that is, they essentially involve a judgment of good(ness), or at any rate some primitive form of one."<sup>263</sup> Griffin argues that this sort of desire is a type of value that comes in two sorts: impersonal and personal values. He asserts that "impersonal values" are those values that are subsumable under some more general human interest(s) and include goods like: pleasure, accomplishment, understanding, etc. In contrast, "personal values" are values which only factor into particular persons' lives and might include such things as "playing the piano well" or "excelling at rock climbing." Such things are only valuable from a particular person's point of view, i.e. they are rooted in what a particular person cares about.<sup>264</sup> Griffin is skeptical about the existence of personal (i.e. idiosyncratic) values because of his belief that "in order for anyone to see anything as valuable from any point of view they must see it as worth wanting" because, he argues, in order for one to see something as worth wanting one must see it as falling under some heading of general human interest.<sup>265</sup> This misunderstands the nature of valuing. Valuing is something done by autonomous agents from an idiosyncratic point of view and an evaluative perspective. What we value, and, as a result, what our self-realization consists in, is a function of who we are as persons (i.e.

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<sup>263</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 27.

<sup>264</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 27.

<sup>265</sup> Griffin, 1996: p. 28.

our idiosyncratic makeup *qua* person), not the result of our recognizing something as being valuable “from any point of view.”

In conclusion, because Griffin misunderstands the nature of prudential value his brute-list theory of well-being suffers from a notable theoretical shortcoming. Specifically, in maintaining that prudential values are necessarily “impersonal,” he offers an account of prudential value, and, by extension, our well-being, which cannot capture the subjective intuition. Again, this is in virtue of his appeal to “human values.” There is no necessary relationship between what humans typically value or find to be valuable and what is good for a particular person. Because of both its appeal to our nature *qua* person and its understanding of the nature of prudential value, well-being as self-realization does not suffer from these problems.

### *2.2.6 Arneson’s Human Flourishing*

The last brute-list theorist I consider, Richard Arneson, provides an excellent bridge to Perfectionist and Eudaimonist Objective-List theories of well-being. This is because while Arneson self-identifies as a brute-list theorist, his theory is formulated in terms of “human flourishing,” a central concept in Perfectionist and Eudaimonist theories of well-being. Because Arneson’s theory appears well-equipped to capture our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation, his primary way of defending his brute-list theory is by attempting to debunk the claim that brute-list theories (like his own) are not theoretically viable because they cannot capture prudential value’s putative attitude dependence. Specifically, in “Human Flourishing Versus Desire Satisfaction”<sup>266</sup> he maintains that something<sup>267</sup> can intrinsically enhance an individual’s well-being even if that individual lacks any pro-attitude toward it. This is in contrast to those objective-list theories that have sought to capture prudential

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<sup>266</sup> Arneson, R. (1999). Human Flourishing Versus Desire Satisfaction. *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 16(1), 113–142.

<sup>267</sup> Specifically, one of the items on his list of prudential goods.

value's putative attitude-dependence<sup>268</sup> by offering "hybrid" theories of well-being that impose an *endorsement constraint* on prudential value. Specifically, hybrid theories incorporate an endorsement constraint on prudential value, maintaining that something cannot enhance an individual's well-being unless it is **both** truly worthwhile (i.e. objectively good)<sup>269</sup> and endorsed by that individual. That is, an individual must be positively oriented (in some way or another) toward that which is objectively good in order for it to be prudentially valuable for him.<sup>270</sup> Arneson rejects any sort of endorsement constraint on prudential value.

Before getting to the particulars of Arneson's theory, including his rejection of an endorsement constraint of any sort, it is worth noting that well-being as self-realization includes elements which one could liken to an "endorsement constraint." That is, insofar as one considers an individual's values as consisting in those aspects of that individual's idiosyncratic makeup that he is autonomous in relation to, one could consider this relationship as constituting a sort of endorsement of its object. Like hybrid theories, well-being as self-realization recognizes the importance of the spirit underlying an endorsement constraint: avoiding offering an alienating conception of an individual's good. Accordingly, I believe that insofar as a theory of well-being seeks to capture the subjective intuition and avoid offering an alienating conception of individuals' good (which any normatively adequate theory ought to) it ought to adopt an endorsement constraint on prudential value. That being said, Arneson's rejection of an endorsement constraint, even in its weakest form, deserves consideration because of what its errors highlight about the nature of prudential value.

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<sup>268</sup> In order to, for example, avoid worries about alienation.

<sup>269</sup> And, accordingly, an item on the "objective list."

<sup>270</sup> I believe that "hybrid" theories of well-being will encounter problems similar to those that I raised against Fletcher. In particular there are likely to be idiosyncratic individuals whose level of well-being is improved by things which may not necessarily be on the list of "objective goods." Further, such theories are still tasked with giving an explanatory account of what makes "objective" goods objectively good for anyone who has them in his life with the proper pro-attitude toward them.

More specifically, I argue that the “endorsements” that Arneson believes to be inessential to the nature of prudential value are actually fundamental to the nature of valuing, to our identity *qua* person, and, consequently, to our well-being. As one might imagine, part of this involves my criticizing Arneson’s view that what is intrinsically prudentially good for a person is fixed independently of that person’s orientation toward any putative good.

Arneson’s describes his brute-list theory of well-being as being a form of “realism about prudential value” because it maintains that there is a fact of the matter as to what is prudentially valuable for a person such that claims about what types of things are prudentially valuable for a person are true or false regardless of an individual’s attitude<sup>271</sup> toward those putative goods. Accordingly, he holds that a person’s evaluative perspective *does not* fix what is prudentially valuable for him.<sup>272</sup> More schematically, Arneson’s objective-list theory of prudential value has three primary commitments: 1.) Denial of “agent sovereignty,” 2.) Endorsement of Realism about Prudential Value, 3.) Belief in a plurality of types of goods.<sup>273</sup>

Like other objective-list theorists,<sup>274</sup> a great deal of Arneson’s defense of his brute-list theory involves his contrasting it with what he sees as its main competitor: desire-satisfaction accounts of well-being. He begins, however, by noting that regardless of whether theories of well-being are subjective or objective they typically offer similar enumerative accounts of well-being. That is, theories of well-being typically offer similar lists of those things (i.e. goods) that contribute to our well-

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<sup>271</sup> Or orientation.

<sup>272</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 119. As we have seen, and will see in what follows, I agree with Arneson on this point to a degree.

<sup>273</sup> In his article “Good, Period” Arneson offers that pleasure and the absence of pain, friendship and love, healthy family ties, meaningful work, knowledge and understanding, and physical, creative, and intellectual achievement, are all the sorts of goods that one ought to have on such a list. See: Arneson, R. (2010). Good, Period. Analysis, Supplemental Volume.

<sup>274</sup> E.g. Fletcher.

being. Accordingly, deep differences between theories are found in their explanatory accounts. This being the case, even if brute-list theories and desire-satisfaction accounts generate similar lists of prudential goods, the *status* of the items on these lists, i.e. why they are there, are different. Consider, for example, the (now well-worn) putative good *achievement*. Now, if it were to turn out that most people do not have the quality of their lives<sup>275</sup> enhanced by achieving things,<sup>276</sup> then subjective theories (e.g. desire-satisfaction theories) ought to be willing to revise their list of those goods that are typically considered to be prudential goods.<sup>277</sup> In contrast, the items listed by an objective-list theory *do not* get their place on the list by being the object of widely held pro-attitudes. Accordingly, while a particular objective-list theory might be mistaken in its assertion that any particular item belongs on the objective-list, what they would be mistaken about is not a conjecture about what people's attitudes under specified conditions would turn out to be, but about what there is most reason to regard as being truly (prudentially) valuable. Otherwise put, brute-list objective-list theories do not merely provide a list of putative goods; they maintain that *what it is to be intrinsically (prudentially) valuable* is to be an item that belongs on their list. In contrast, well-being as self-realization maintains that what it is for something to be intrinsically valuable for a person is for it to realize one of that person's values. Understood thusly, it has both objective and subjective components. One of the *objective* components of well-being as self-realization lies in the fact that there is a fact of the matter concerning what an individual's values are. That is, there is a fact of

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<sup>275</sup> I.e. their well-being.

<sup>276</sup> They might, for example, not care about whether they achieve anything and/or feel nothing (i.e. are left "cold") in those instances in which they do achieve something.

<sup>277</sup> I.e. their list of those "goods" which typically contribute to individuals' well-being, their "enumerative" theory of well-being.



the matter concerning both an individual's volitional/evaluative makeup<sup>278</sup> and whether something realizes those values. In addition, self-realization is good for an individual regardless of that individual's orientation toward it. The *subjective* component is the fact that what is prudentially valuable for an individual is determined through appeal to that individual's idiosyncratic/evaluative makeup including that individual's evaluative perspective (e.g. certain pro-attitudes and/or endorsements) and *not* any facts concerning what species that individual belongs to.

The most prominent type of subjective theory is desire-satisfaction accounts of well-being. Desires, and their satisfaction, are offered as ideal candidates for what is intrinsically prudentially valuable because of their intentionality and pro-attitudinal nature. Accordingly, focusing on an individual's desires seems like an ideal way to avoid running afoul of an endorsement constraint. Again, the intuition underlying an endorsement constraint is the idea that even if one holds that improvements in an individual's level of well-being ought to be identified with attaining what is objectively choice-worthy,<sup>279</sup> it is still an entirely contingent matter whether or not an individual has any positive attitude of any sort toward the attainment of that good/those goods.<sup>280</sup> One's life might, for instance, be filled with items from an Objective-List (i.e. objective goods), yet these goods may leave one entirely "cold," i.e. one would not evaluate or view them as positively contributing to one's well-being (one might even be repulsed by them), so that one is alienated from what an objective-list theory posits as good for him. Accordingly, unless one incorporates an endorsement constraint into one's account of prudential value, one's having certain objective prudential goods in one's life may not enhance the subjective quality of

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<sup>278</sup> Importantly, an individual's evaluative perspective at any particular time, e.g. an individual's access to what he values (i.e. his volitional makeup) is not omniscient or infallible.

<sup>279</sup> I.e. the items on the objective list.

<sup>280</sup> Arneson, 1999: p 146.

one's life. It is sensitivity to this intuition that drives hybrid theorists to concede that while desire-satisfaction, or some other pro-attitude, is not a *sufficient* condition on prudential value, it is a *necessary* condition. Consequently, they maintain that something can only contribute to an individual's well-being if it is both objectively worthwhile (i.e. intrinsically prudentially valuable) and the object of some pro-attitude.<sup>281</sup>

Arneson rejects an endorsement constraint<sup>282</sup> on prudential value for several reasons. First, he argues that it is too demanding a condition to impose on theories of prudential value because, he believes, there are some things<sup>283</sup> which improve the quality of a person's life (increasing its prudential value) regardless of whether that individual has a pro-attitude toward it. As an example of such a good he offers "pleasant surprises" which, he argues, by their very nature take an individual by surprise such that he cannot have a reflective pro-attitude toward them. Here, I think that Arneson is a bit too fast in maintaining that one who espouses an endorsement constraint cannot explain or capture pleasant surprises' putative prudential value. That is, one could maintain that pleasant surprises are, or can be, endorsed after the fact; i.e. surprises begin as merely surprises<sup>284</sup> and then once endorsed, through some pro-attitude or other, are "*pleasant* surprises" which are in fact prudentially valuable. What's more, it seems to ignore the fact that some people are simply the sort of person<sup>285</sup> who does not like pleasant surprises regardless of their content, whereas other people do value them and have the quality of their lives positively contributed to by them.

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<sup>281</sup> It is also worth noting that one of the motivations behind an endorsement condition is theorists' attraction toward "well-being internalism," the view that any valid claim about what is good for an individual must resonate with that individual's motivational makeup.

<sup>282</sup> Along with those versions of well-being internalism based upon it.

<sup>283</sup> I.e. objective goods.

<sup>284</sup> I.e. unexpected and, hence, initially unendorsed.

<sup>285</sup> I.e. has an idiosyncratic/evaluative makeup which is such that.

Second, and more importantly for my purposes, Arneson argues that it might be a mere psychological defect or quirk in an individual's psychology which prevents him from desiring or having some sort of pro-attitude toward that which is (in fact) good for him. He maintains that such a defect ought not affect what we consider, or in fact is, prudentially valuable for an individual. Arneson argues for these points, and, consequently, for brute-list theories' preferability over desire-satisfaction theories by analyzing scenarios in which an individual has a life that is rich in objective goods but poor in desire-satisfaction. He takes these cases to demonstrate that one can have a life high in prudential value, i.e. one with a high level of well-being, without one's endorsing the goods in one's life.<sup>286</sup> More technically, and this is where Arneson's offering a *species-based* objective theory becomes apparent, he maintains that some things are good or bad for us *qua* human because humans are the sorts of beings for whom certain things can be good or bad for them because they stand in a particular relationship to them.<sup>287</sup> Both this commitment and Arneson's wholesale rejection of an endorsement constraint leads his theory to offer highly counter-intuitive verdicts including, but not limited to, offering an alienating conception of an individual's good which cannot capture the subjective intuition. This alienation is manifest, for example, in the fact that in some cases Arneson is committed to maintaining that an individual stands to suffer a great loss to his well-being while from that individual's autonomous/rational/etc. evaluative perspective/makeup this loss (i.e. his missing out on a great objective good) has little impact on his level of well-being, i.e. the quality of his life. I offer an example of such a situation in what follows.

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<sup>286</sup> His believes that the existence of such cases undermines the need for an endorsement constraint on prudential value.

<sup>287</sup> Here one can also see Arneson's espousing a locative analysis of the good: he posits that certain things are good simpliciter and it is good for us to stand in a particular relationship to them.

Arneson believes that examples of lives that are rich in objective value but poor in informed desire-satisfaction (i.e. endorsement) are easily imagined. The first such scenario imagines an individual who is in favorable circumstances and who, as a result, sets extremely demanding goals<sup>288</sup> for herself: She wants to become an important public figure who changes the course of history, a consummate world class artist whose achievements are extensive, strikingly original, brilliantly executed, and well-recognized in her day, and a powerful matriarch who molds her family into a lasting dynasty which is devoted to her memory. In light of the demanding goals that she sets for herself, it is easy to imagine that when measured against the standard set by her desires, this woman's life turns out to be a miserable failure. Imagine, for instance, that while she is extremely noteworthy, she is not history making, she is only a somewhat recognized artist, and that while she is a strong and beloved matriarch, her family is not *solely* devoted to her memory. That being said, in the course of piling up these "failures"<sup>289</sup> this woman has many of the items on a brute-list to a high degree in her life.<sup>290</sup> Arneson maintains that considering the preponderance of objective-goods in her life, this individual has a high level of well-being. He takes this case to illustrate both the theoretical shortcomings of desire-satisfaction theories and the fact that even if satisfying one's major life goals (i.e. one's desires) is one item on the objective-list "failure to achieve this item is outweighed by her striking success in other dimensions of the good life as rated by the Objective-List measure."<sup>291</sup> Arneson takes these considerations to show that one can lead an excellent life, i.e. one that is high in prudential value, despite its being a failure on the dimension of informed desire-satisfaction or endorsement of any sort.

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<sup>288</sup> And who has desires corresponding to these goals.

<sup>289</sup> "Failures" in that they fell short of extremely demanding standards. After all, her desires were not strictly satisfied.

<sup>290</sup> I.e. she has several objective goods in her life.

<sup>291</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 143.

This, he believes, lends credence to his objective-list conception of prudential value and demonstrates an endorsement constraint's being otiose when it comes to prudential value.<sup>292</sup> As I intend to demonstrate, however, such an outright rejection of an endorsement constraint, *of any sort*, leads to Arneson's offering an alienating conception of an individual's good which cannot capture the subjective intuition.

Even though Arneson rejects an endorsement constraint on prudential value he acknowledges its attractiveness, conceding that "it is disagreeable to think that one can improve the quality of a person's life by manipulating him or forcing him to gain putative goods that he does not regard as valuable and would not seek on his own absent the manipulation or forcing."<sup>293</sup> Further, he recognizes that the impetus behind an endorsement constraint is rooted in the liberal aversion to paternalism.<sup>294</sup> Despite this, he does not believe that there is any version of an endorsement constraint that ought to be incorporated into an account of prudential value. His primary reason for rejecting an endorsement constraint is that "people's reasons for declining to endorse some putative good they are seeking or that is falling in their lap can be weak, confused, or even nonexistent."<sup>295</sup> To illustrate this, he imagines another individual, "Samantha," who writes a brilliant poem but who denies that this achievement has any value or in any way enhances her life; i.e. she does not endorse it as being prudentially valuable. Further, he imagines that the reason behind Samantha's dismissal of her achievement's prudential value is her espousing a shallow and silly

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<sup>292</sup> In contrast to the preceding sort of case Arneson offers that there are cases in which an individual lives in bleak conditions and, as a result, forms limited and unambitious desires that he is successful in satisfying. In this case desire-satisfaction theories appear committed to holding that this individual is well-off, while according to any plausible objective-list theory this individual is having a poor life indeed. In light of the preceding considerations, Arneson argues that in those cases in which informed-desire satisfaction theories and objective-list theories give different verdicts on individual's levels of well-being, the objective-list verdicts are more compelling.

<sup>293</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 147.

<sup>294</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 147.

<sup>295</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 148

aesthetic theory that she has thoughtlessly embraced.<sup>296</sup> While Arneson recognizes that Samantha's level of well-being would be higher were she to endorse her achievement, say, because she would have both an achievement and a positive attitude (perhaps, pleasure) toward her achievement, he argues that her failure to endorse it does not negate its prudential value for her.

Now, Arneson is aware that one might object to his analysis of Samantha's well-being on the grounds that it fails to distinguish the value of her achievement impersonally regarded as an instance of achievement (which has, say, "perfectionist" value) and its value *for* Samantha, i.e. its prudential value as a positive contribution to Samantha's well-being. That is, one who is drawn to a subjectivist theory of well-being, e.g. my self-realization view, could, for example, question how an achievement which Samantha considers to be (and experiences as) worthless or trivial, i.e. which she does not value,<sup>297</sup> would nonetheless qualify as a positive contribution to her well-being. Such theories might charge that Arneson is offering an assessment of Samantha's level of well-being which she is alienated from.

Arneson attempts to blunt the force of the preceding sort of objection by imagining that Samantha's dismissal, i.e. her non-endorsement, of her achievement's value arises from a disposition to non-endorsement which is an outlier among her psychological traits. She might, for instance, "enthusiastically work on her poem, organize a large stretch of her life around the project of its construction, and take pleasure in the process and the product" it is just that she regards what she is doing as worthless on the strength of a bad aesthetic theory which she accepts."<sup>298</sup> Arneson believes that in light of the way in which Samantha is engaged in the activity of writing her poem it is clear that her failure to endorse its (prudential) value or worth is

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<sup>296</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 148.

<sup>297</sup> I.e. which she is alienated from and which leaves her "cold."

<sup>298</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 149.

not the result of some deeply held belief about its value so that her failure to endorse the activity's value ought not entirely mitigate that activity's prudential value.

While the preceding argument might undermine a “strong” version of an endorsement constraint, which requires, say, explicit endorsement of a putative good, it does not affect the viability of well-being as self-realization. That is, my theory can capture the same intuition that Arneson seeks to draw upon with Samantha's case. It is able to do this because it does not maintain that an individual's evaluative perspective at any particular time settles, or is an infallible guide to, what that individual values. Take Samantha. Even though she might not explicitly endorse her poem as being valuable such that she calls it worthless,<sup>299</sup> the way that Arneson describes Samantha, it is clear that the poem (and the work involved in creating it) is something she values. After all, she organized a good part of her life around its creation; that is, her volitional makeup is such that working on her poem structures a good deal of it. This is, at least in part, *what it is for something to be one of one's values*. Accordingly, well-being as self-realization is able to say that to the extent that working on her poetry is one of Samantha's values, her doing so realizes that value and is, consequently, prudentially valuable for her. Otherwise put, the fact that an individual values something can be manifest in activities other than just explicit endorsement. This is due to the “objective” aspect of well-being as self-realization: there is a fact of the matter about what one values, i.e. one's idiosyncratic evaluative makeup, including one's volitional makeup,<sup>300</sup> such that an individual's non-endorsement of something that he values does not, by that very fact, make it such that that individual does not value it and that its realization does not contribute to his well-

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<sup>299</sup> It ought to be noted here that Arneson equivocates here between perfectionist, aesthetic, and prudential value.

<sup>300</sup> I.e. the structure of one's will.

being.<sup>301</sup> They might, for example, be manipulated, emotionally overwrought, or otherwise put in a situation in which they have less than ideal insight into the state of their volitional makeup or are likewise affected such that they do not endorse something which they otherwise stably and resiliently value. An individual's evaluative perspective plays more of a role in determining what an individual values when an individual is actively, stably, and resiliently "alienated" from, i.e. rejects something's prudential value or insists upon its disvalue, as opposed to merely not endorsing its value. Such an individual is actively alienated from something as opposed to merely failing to endorse something that he values.

Arneson believes that non-endorsed objective goods, like achievement, can contribute positively to an individual's well-being and that this contribution can only be explained by Objective-List theories which hold that some things are components of the good life and that one's having them in one's life enriches one's life<sup>302</sup> and one's lacking them impoverishes it.<sup>303</sup> The failure to endorse such goods, he argues, simply means that one has made a mistaken evaluation; it does not automatically or necessarily alter their value.<sup>304,305</sup> Ultimately then, if one were to encapsulate why Arneson rejects an endorsement constraint on prudential value it is because he believes that "evaluative judgments are not self-certifying." That is, he maintains that the mere fact that one endorses something as prudentially valuable does *not* make that

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<sup>301</sup> This same fact becomes relevant when I explain in chapter five how well-being as self-realization can explain the phenomenon of self-sacrifice.

<sup>302</sup> I.e. positively contributes to one's well-being.

<sup>303</sup> I.e. negatively affects one's well-being.

<sup>304</sup> Again, I agree, except that I maintain that an individual's not endorsing something does not necessarily mean that individual does not value it. While it seems reasonable to think that the majority of the time an individual will be disposed to endorse what he values, they might not always do so. That being said, it would stretch credulity to maintain that an individual genuinely values something that he is resiliently alienated from; i.e. something he never endorsed.

<sup>305</sup> When it comes to (what Arneson believes to be improbable) scenarios in which a person attains (i.e. has in his life) but fails to endorse any of the objective goods in his life (for miscellaneous reasons, none of which would withstand scrutiny), then, Arneson argues, it would stretch credulity past the breaking point to maintain that this single quirk of her valuations reduces all of her riches to nothing.



thing prudentially valuable for one.<sup>306</sup> Again, he thinks that one might fail to endorse something which is putatively valuable for “trivial” reasons, e.g. one is led by, say, snobbery or shame to not endorse one’s achievements. That being said, he concedes that it is plausible to think “other things being equal, the value of a putative good for an agent is enhanced if the agent has a proper and reasonable understanding of the value of the good.”<sup>307</sup>

If, in light of the preceding considerations, one finds Arneson’s arguments against a “strong” endorsement constraint to be compelling, one might still be inclined toward accepting what he calls a “weak endorsement” constraint on prudential value. As opposed to positing that in order for something to be prudentially valuable an individual must *explicitly* endorse it, a weak endorsement constraint maintains that nothing can intrinsically enhance the quality of a person’s life unless “the person has some positive, affirmative attitude toward that element of her life.”<sup>308</sup> Like its stronger version, the intuition underlying the weak endorsement constraint is that a purported good that is in one’s life that leaves one utterly “cold”<sup>309</sup> cannot be intrinsically prudentially valuable for one. Well-being as self-realization endorses something akin to a weak endorsement constraint except that instead of positing that one must have a positive “attitude” toward some element of his life, it maintains that an individual must *value* something in order for its realization to contribute to that individual’s well-being *qua* person.<sup>310</sup> Again, whether or not one values something is a matter of the structure of that individual’s will and whether that individual is

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<sup>306</sup> Again, I agree. While explicit endorsement is not sufficient for valuing something, it may be part of (or evidence of) it.

<sup>307</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 142.

<sup>308</sup> Arneson 1999: p. 152.

<sup>309</sup> I.e. without any pro-attitude or orientation toward it (i.e. alienated from it).

<sup>310</sup> That being said, considering the nature of the phenomenon of valuing, it would be odd (if not conceptually impossible) for an individual to resiliently not have a positive attitude toward his or her values.

autonomous in relation to it. It is worth noting that there is an important difference between an individual's being left "cold" by a putative good and his being "alienated" from it. While he might feel "cold" and not have any pro-attitude toward or endorse something he values, say, because of some odd temporary psychological quirk,<sup>311</sup> it is still the case that his will is structured such that he values it. That being said, an individual's being resiliently "alienated" from<sup>312</sup> something precludes the possibility that he values it because some sort of "identification" is constitutive of valuing.

Arneson concedes that it is understandable that we intuitively think that an individual who has a high level of well-being according to an objective-list theory, but who fails to satisfy the weak endorsement constraint may go through life unhappy, entirely frustrated and, as a result, completely lacking in subjective satisfaction<sup>313</sup> such that we ought to be skeptical about evaluating him as having a high level of well-being. His response to this worry, which essentially amounts to an attempt to assuage worries about alienation, is his stipulating that a life that does well according to the objective-list account, but fails to satisfy the weak endorsement constraint, could not be entirely lacking in subjective satisfaction if: (1) the objective-list includes (some type of) subjective satisfaction among its entries, and (2) the objective list has a structure such that some threshold level of subjective satisfaction must be attained (no matter how high one's score on other dimension of the good life) in order for the life to qualify as attaining a satisfactory level of overall well-being. Arneson is careful to note, however, that "a life which qualifies as high in well-being according to the Objective-List account that includes features (1) and (2) need not satisfy the weak endorsement constraint, because the sources of subjective satisfaction that satisfy features 1 and 2 need not include any subjective satisfaction taken in, or

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<sup>311</sup> He might, for example, have just smelled a bad smell, be in a bad mood for an unrelated reason, etc.

<sup>312</sup> I.e. lacking any sort of positive orientation at any time under any conditions.

<sup>313</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 154.

positive attitude toward, any component of one's life that are entries on the Objective-List and significantly intrinsically enhance one's well-being."<sup>314</sup>

Arneson's rejection of an endorsement constraint leads him to offer counter-intuitive verdicts in a variety of cases. I want to begin with a case in which Arneson appears committed to an individual's suffering a significant loss to his well-being, yet according to that individual's idiosyncratic makeup and evaluative perspective (i.e. what he values) that loss' severity is significantly mitigated to the extent that its very status as a (prudential) loss is called into question. Imagine Theodore, a composer who is about to finish a great symphony that he has been working on for years. Suddenly he finds out that he has a brain tumor and only has months to live. As a result, he entirely quits working on his symphony and decides to spend the rest of his time with his wife and children. In Theodore's case there is an objective good, a completed symphony,<sup>315</sup> and an individual, Theodore, who has an idiosyncratic evaluative perspective concerning that good. More specifically, Theodore is on the cusp of having a great objective good in his life, i.e. "achievement" in the form of the creation of an important work of art that he has dedicated years of his life to, and he has an evolving perspective and orientation toward that good. That is, upon learning of his diagnosis Theodore abandons his symphony in order to spend time with his wife and kids because he has decided that is what, in the grand scheme of things, he really values and considers to matter most in his life.

Insofar as a brute-list theory maintains that something like "achievement" or "aesthetic expression/accomplishment" is an objective good, Theodore has suffered a great loss: because of his limited time on earth he has had to walk away from having an alleged objective good in his life. However, one can also easily imagine that were

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<sup>314</sup> Arneson, 1999: p. 154.

<sup>315</sup> I.e. a great work of art that is high in objective aesthetic value and whose completion would give his life a great deal of achievement.

one to question Theodore about his walking way from his symphony in order to spend more time with his wife and children, he might not feel a significant sense of loss at not being able to finish the symphony. That is, being forced to consider his mortality might lead Theodore to “realize what really matters in his life,” i.e. what he really values: spending time with loved ones. For him, realizing this value is what contributes to the quality of his life so that his not being able to finish his symphony is no real (prudential) loss. Accordingly, while he might feel a small sense of loss at not being able to finish his symphony, one can easily imagine that this is less than the sense of loss that, say, the classical music aficionado thinks is appropriate or justified.<sup>316</sup> If Arneson is to be believed, Theodore is suffering quite a loss, he was close to achieving something of high artistic merit, i.e. having something objectively prudentially valuable (an achievement) in his life, and the fact that Theodore no longer values or has a pro-attitude toward this achievement does not negate its value or the loss that Theodore suffers by not completing it. In contrast, according to Theodore’s idiosyncratic evaluative makeup and his evaluative perspective, i.e. *what he values*, he has not suffered any significant loss in not finishing his symphony; in fact, he might even assert that his terminal diagnosis helped him see “what really matters,” i.e. what really contributes to the quality of his life for him. Importantly, were one to question Theodore about what it was exactly that he “saw,” I believe that it is likely that he would assert that his diagnosis helped to clarify for him what it was that he valued most in life, *not* that it allowed him to clearly see what had the most objective value. As such, we have a divide: how Arneson’s brute-list theory evaluates Theodore’s well-being and how Theodore experiences his level of well-being. To the

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<sup>316</sup> That is, that it is not in accord with the symphony’s “objective” prudential value. Relatedly, one can imagine that Theodore, upon getting his diagnosis, may redouble his efforts at finishing the symphony (and spend less time with his family) because he values the contribution that it would make to his art. In this case his finishing the symphony is what would contribute the most to the prudential value of his life and, again, this is a function of what he values.

extent that these two measurements diverge in *any case*, and when there is no reason to think that an individual's valuations are not autonomous,<sup>317</sup> one ought to consider an individual's evaluation of his life as being authoritative. To maintain otherwise is to court worries about alienation and fail to capture the subjective intuition. This is exactly the verdict which well-being as self-realization can deliver and which Arneson's theory clearly does not.

Ultimately then, while Arneson's discussion of an endorsement constraint on prudential value is both nuanced and innovative, it fails to appreciate the special relationship that an individual bears to those aspects of his psychological/volitional/etc. makeup he is autonomous in relation to, i.e. his values. One can see this relationship as constituting a sort of endorsement. Accordingly, Arneson's wholesale rejection of an endorsement constraint on prudential value fails to recognize the centrality of this relationship to our well-being.<sup>318</sup> That being said, while an individual's evaluative perspective at any particular time does not *necessarily*<sup>319</sup> settle or indicate what that individual values,<sup>320</sup> it plays an important role because any theory which ignores this perspective runs the risk of offering an alienating conception of an individual's good. In Theodore's case, for example, one has an individual who according to Arneson's objective-list theory suffers a great loss,<sup>321</sup> yet from that his own evaluative perspective the loss of a putative "objective" good is significantly mitigated, if not neutralized, in virtue of his (re)evaluation of what really matters in his life.<sup>322</sup> Again, it is Arneson's rejection of an endorsement

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<sup>317</sup> I.e. not really "his" values.

<sup>318</sup> I.e. to what is prudentially valuable for us qua person.

<sup>319</sup> Although it does play a role in what an individual values and is a very good heuristic for determining what an individual values.

<sup>320</sup> It might, for example, simply be a reliable indicator of what that individual values.

<sup>321</sup> I.e. the frustration of a great achievement, i.e. Theodore's having an objective good in his life.

<sup>322</sup> I.e. in this case accomplishment's putative value pales in comparison (to the extent that its "objective" prudential value is swamped) to the value that the individual attaches to spending time with his loved ones.

constraint on prudential value, or more specifically his discounting the importance of an individual's idiosyncratic makeup<sup>323</sup> in determinations of prudential value, which causes his evaluation of an individual's level of well-being to depart from that individual's own perspective on his life and, in my opinion, results in his offering an account of individuals' good which they are likely alienated from and prevents his theory from capturing the subjective intuition. Further, it is especially important to note that Theodore's case does not involve some "disposition to non-endorsement" like the sort that Arneson imagines in Samantha's case. Instead, Theodore's dismissing/discounting the prudential value/loss of his unfinished opus is not the result of some "outlying" psychological quirk, but is the result of his (re)evaluating (or paying close attention to) his priorities in life. It is the result of his shifting what he values (or recognizing what he "truly" values) and what is prudentially valuable for him, i.e. what will improve (or detract from) the quality of (what remains) of his life. Brute-list theories which reject the importance of an individual's idiosyncratic makeup, i.e. what he values, in determination of what that individual's well-being consists in (or in evaluations of it), are forced to maintain that individuals can experience gains and losses to their well-being which they may be entirely alienated from; as such their theories are unlikely to capture the subjective intuition and risk offering alienating conceptions of their well-being. Either of these robs such theories of normative adequacy and authority.

### **2.3 Perfectionist Theories of Well-Being**

Leaving aside brute-list theories, I now turn to Perfectionist theories of well-being. Well-being Perfectionism is an objective-list theory of well-being that identifies an individual's (prudential) good with the perfection of that individual's

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<sup>323</sup> Including that individual's evaluative perspective.

nature so that “the good life for an X is identified by the core facts about what it means to be an X, by the core account of X-hood” so that for humans “perfectionism declares that the best life is determined by the core account of what it means to be human.”<sup>324</sup> Perfectionism, as applied to humans, comes in several different forms depending upon what a particular theory or theorist specifies as the relevant class that an individual ought to be evaluated as a member of and as the capacities which are relevant to that individual’s well-being. Put in its most general form Well-being Perfectionism include three separable claims:

- 1) *Perfectionism*: The good life for an x is determined by the core account of what it is to be an x.
- 2) *Identification of the Core Capacities*: The core account of what it is to be an x involves a specific set of capacities, {a, b, c}.
- 3) *Fulfillment of the Core Capacities*: A life lived according to the capacities {a, b, c} involves certain specific activities {q, r, s}.

Typically, Perfectionist theories maintain that our well-being is contributed to by the development and exercise of our “essential properties.” A corollary of this is that neither desire-satisfaction nor pleasure is *intrinsically* prudentially valuable. Instead, they are only *instrumentally* prudentially valuable to the extent that they further the development and exercise of one’s essential properties.

It ought to be noted that there is a debate concerning whether Perfectionism ought to be understood as a theory of prudential value.<sup>325</sup> For instance, in his book *Perfectionism* Thomas Hurka maintains that Perfectionism ought to be understood as an account of “the good life” in a *moral*, not prudential, sense. Consequently he describes “the good life” as the life that humans ought to seek regardless of their contingent desires or inclinations, i.e. regardless of their idiosyncratic makeup.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Dorsey, D. (2010). Three Arguments for Perfectionism. *Nous*, 44, 59–79. p. 63.

<sup>325</sup> This is manifest in, for example, my earlier criticisms that some theorists simply took prudential and perfectionist value to be equivalent without arguing for why this is the case.

<sup>326</sup> The very things that are central to subjective theories of well-being.

Further, Hurka emphasizes that Perfectionism *ought not* be understood as an account of well-being. To this end he argues:

Well-Being itself is often characterized subjectively, in terms of actual or hypothetical desires. Given this subjective characterization, perfectionism cannot concern well-being. Its ideal cannot define the “good-for” in a human because the ideal is one he ought to pursue regardless of his desires. In my view perfectionism should never be expressed in terms of well-being. It gives an account of the good human life, or of what is good in a human, but not of what is “good for” a human in the sense tied to well-being.<sup>327</sup>

I think one ought to take Hurka at his word that he does not offer his “Perfectionism” as an account of prudential value. Accordingly, one ought not treat *his* Perfectionism thusly. That being said, considering his theory’s theoretical attractiveness, i.e. its clear development and subtlety, it is worth considering Perfectionism as a theory of well-being if only to better understand the nature of such accounts. In addition, the reasons that Hurka believes that Perfectionism ought not be understood as a theory of well-being are not entirely compelling. Take, for example, two reasons that Hurka offers for why one should reject the idea that Perfectionism ought to be understood as a theory of prudential value. First, he asserts that a theory of well-being *must be subjective* and that Perfectionism, properly understood, is not subjectivist. Second, he rejects the notion that “well-being” is a concept that stands in need of any specifying conditions because, he argues, “well-being is meaningless apart from theories of well-being, and apart from the notion...of a “good life *tout court*.”<sup>328</sup> Consider the former claim. Many well-being theorists, namely other objective theories, including several of those I consider, would flatly disagree with Hurka. That is, they take themselves to be offering theories of well-being that are objective, i.e. theories of well-being which maintain that something is (or can be) good for someone regardless of that

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<sup>327</sup> Hurka, T. (1996). *Perfectionism*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 17-18.

<sup>328</sup> Hurka, 1996: p. 194 fn. 17.



individual's attitude/orientation/etc. toward it.<sup>329</sup> Considering the latter claim, there appears to be good reason to think that the concept "well-being" is far from meaningless outside of theories of well-being. In contrast, it appears necessary in order to understand and explain several normative concepts that are central to our lives. For instance, the concept well-being is strongly tied (and appealed) to in our inquiries about prudential reason; e.g. we take a person to have prudential reasons to do what is in his best (self)interest.<sup>330</sup> That is, our judgments about "well-being" are ubiquitous in much normative inquiry so that "insofar as we have considered judgments about what is in our interests, or judgments our prudential reasons, we will thereby have considered judgments about welfare."<sup>331</sup>

Another reason why one might reject Hurka's insistence that Perfectionism ought not be thought of as a theory of well-being is that many of our considered judgments about individuals' well-being are susceptible to a Perfectionist analysis. Again, take Rawls' "grass counter."<sup>332</sup> A typical response to this case is thinking that in sitting around all day counting blades of grass, the mathematician's life is not going as well as it could be were he to, for example, work on difficult math problems or teach a class to undergraduates. This case is often appealed to in order to support our Perfectionist intuitions about well-being. That is, many intuitively think that in sitting around all day counting blades of grass this individual is deprived of some important goods in life: friendship, meaningful achievement, etc. Accordingly, Perfectionist theories seem well-suited (and well-equipped) to explain why we think that an individual whose sole pursuit in life is counting blades of grass all day is not doing as well prudentially as he might be were he to engage in an activity which exercised and

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<sup>329</sup> Otherwise put, prudential value is mind-independent.

<sup>330</sup> Dorsey, 2010: p. 62.

<sup>331</sup> Dorsey, 2010: p. 62.

<sup>332</sup> Rawls, 2009 p. 432-3.

perfected his characteristically human capacities. Even if one disagrees with their verdicts, Perfectionist analyses of well-being appear well-suited to speak to our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation. In light of these considerations, i.e. considering both how central the concept “well-being” is to our normative investigations and concerns and the fact that many of our considered judgments about our well-being are susceptible to a Perfectionist analysis, I propose that it is both appropriate and theoretically useful to examine a conception of Perfectionism which is based on Hurka’s work in order to illuminate the theoretical strengths and weaknesses of Perfectionist theories of prudential value.

### *2.3.1 Overview of Perfectionism*

If one is willing to grant my stipulating that Perfectionism ought to be understood as a theory of well-being, it is worth delving deeper into the details of Perfectionism understood as an account of prudential value. Understood as such, Perfectionism maintains that what is intrinsically prudentially valuable for an individual is anything (e.g. activities, relationships, etc.) that develops and perfects his nature and that this is the case regardless of his orientation (or lack of orientation) toward those activities, relationships, etc. Accordingly, Perfectionism differs from the other objective theories I have considered thus far in its identifying an individual’s good with the development, fulfillment, and *perfection* of that individual’s “nature.” Accordingly, a well-being perfectionist would maintain that the good life for an “X” is identified by the core facts about what it means to be an X, i.e. by the core account of X-hood. The best life<sup>333</sup> for humans according to well-being Perfectionism is, for instance, determined by the core account of what it means to be human so that an individual has a high level of well-being to the extent that he develops, exercises, and

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<sup>333</sup> I.e. the most prudentially valuable life.

perfects the capacities characteristic of humans to a high degree. Again, what differentiates Perfectionist theories is what they take to be the “core” capacities or properties (of some particular class) whose development and perfection they take to contribute to an individual’s well-being.

Any perfectionist theory of well-being’s account of the “core” capacities or properties whose development and perfection contributes to an individual’s well-being is going to have to stipulate that the properties relevant for evaluating an individual’s well-being are picked out by a *restricted* set of the necessary and essential features of, say, humans. This is because humans have a wide array of necessary properties. Accordingly, one needs to find, i.e. specify, the subset of human properties/features/capacities whose development and perfection are prudentially valuable. Hurka’s approach to this is his maintaining that one ought to focus on those properties that are essential to humans and conditional on their being living beings.<sup>334</sup> More specifically, he maintains that our “human essence” includes both theoretical and practical rationality along with those physical capacities that can form relevant perfectionist achievements.

In maintaining that there is a conceptual link between an individual’s essence (*qua* human) and his well-being,<sup>335</sup> Hurka offers a “top-down” type of argument in that he believes that “one’s developing one’s nature forms an independently plausible ideal” for the good life. More specifically, he argues that:

The goal of developing human nature, or exercising essential human powers is deeply attractive. This is reflected in its widespread acceptance. The ideal is implicit in non-philosophical talk of living a “full-human” or “truly-human” life and is endorsed by diverse philosophers...Some value contemplation; others value action. Some value a communal life; others value a life of solitude. If, despite these differences, these philosophers all ground their particular values in a single ideal of human nature, that ideal must have intrinsic appeal. Some

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<sup>334</sup> Hurka, 1996: p. 16.

<sup>335</sup> In that it is prudentially valuable for an individual to develop and perfect his (human) nature.

of this appeal can be explained, if nature is essence. Because each of us is essentially a human, to develop human nature is not to develop some temporary or tangential property, such as being a lawyer or hockey fan. It is to develop what makes us what we are.<sup>336</sup>

This sort of approach posits an explanatory link between the development of an individual's "essence" and that individual's doing well prudentially in that a property's being essential to our human essence/identity *explains* its prudential value. This is because well-being Perfectionists believe that the standard set by one's developing one's essence is an independently plausible evaluative ideal. One can call this the "essence well-being" link. Now, even if one were to grant that there is such a link, a Perfectionist still needs to specify that subset of our "essentially human" properties or capacities which comprise our essence and whose perfection is prudentially valuable. Again, this subset needs to be specified because we have many essential properties that, putatively, have no bearing on our well-being. It is essential to us, for instance, that we both take up space and exercise our capacity for taking in nutrients and excreting them, yet neither of these "essential" properties seems to have any relevant bearing on our well-being.

The preceding considerations necessitate any Perfectionist theory's offering a way of ruling out prudentially "trivial" properties. To the extent that Perfectionist theories are not successful in ruling out such properties they run afoul of the "wrong properties objection."<sup>337</sup> Hurka, for example, is sensitive to this objection and realizes that he must restrict the range of prudentially relevant necessary properties. The necessity of this move is, however, quite telling. As Dorsey notes, "the *reason* that Hurka is licensed to restrict the range of essential properties that are relevant for an account of the good, and not restrict them *further*, appears to depend upon which

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<sup>336</sup> Hurka, 1996: p. 32.

<sup>337</sup> This is the objection that perfectionist theories end up stipulating that certain "trivial" properties, i.e. spatial extension, are prudentially valuable.

properties are picked as independently valuable of themselves.”<sup>338</sup> If, however, a Perfectionist account of our human essence is simply tailor made to offer plausible verdicts about prudential value then the essence-welfare link appears to be trivial. Accordingly, Perfectionist theories must avoid its being the case that their appeal to essence is merely crafted so that its value is not simply explained by our considered judgments. That is, in order to defend Perfectionism through an appeal to our essence “it *must* be the case that the essentialist ideal is plausible independent of whatever consequences it might entail.”<sup>339</sup> This, however, is not the case. That is, I believe that appeals to “essence” only deliver plausible judgments about our well-being when the notion of human essence is already fine-tuned in order to deliver the right verdicts. This, however, threatens to make the connection between essence and welfare trivial. In order to make the preceding argument’s relevance to my own project clear, it can be put into the terms that I have been using to frame debates about the nature of our well-being. Put thusly: Hurka’s Perfectionism is only able to offer a standard against which we are able to make intuitively *compelling* flourishing and deprivation judgments by offering and relying upon an account of our “human essence” which is simply tailor made to provide such verdicts. As such, the connection between our essence and well-being is trivial because the former is tailored specifically for the latter. Accordingly, Hurka’s theory is only able to provide compelling evaluative judgments about individuals’ well-being by offering an account of our “essence” whose connection to our well-being is trivial.

### 2.3.2 *The Perils of Perfection*

Finally, there is good reason to think that Perfectionism about well-being, especially its stipulation that the development, exercise, and perfection of an

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<sup>338</sup> Dorsey, 2010: p. 68.

<sup>339</sup> Dorsey, 2010: p 69.

individual's human capacities is prudentially valuable, cannot capture the subjective intuition and offers an alienating conception of an individual's good. Consider the following scenario:

Angela is a high ranking career diplomat for the UK who is contemplating an early retirement at the age of sixty-two. Having served with distinction, Angela is going into retirement with a good deal of money as she and her husband prepare to retire to Tuscany where they will be near family and friends. Such a life would be tremendously satisfying and occupied with good company, food, and drink. Further, this retirement would be a welcomed and much-deserved respite from her demanding job. However, before Angela can settle on her plans, a potentially violent political crisis arises overseas and Angela is asked to take an important post where her considerable wisdom and skills would be of great use. This assignment would be taxing and would frequently involve dealing with unwholesome individuals about matters of extreme gravity often calling for a fair measure of anger and indignation on her part. That being said, the experience would not be grueling or even unpleasant on the whole, as Angela does take pleasure in doing what she does best. Further, the job would not be so taxing that Angela would not be able to spend some time with her family or friends, or achieve a modicum of leisure. It would, however, be far less pleasant than an early retirement.<sup>340</sup>

One can imagine that from Angela's perspective her choice is pretty near a coin toss: she could reasonably choose either alternative. As such, she could refuse the position with no regrets.<sup>341</sup> Despite this, Angela accepts the assignment without regret because the stakes are high enough that she feels that they are probably worth it. Accordingly, she goes on to serve admirably and with a good deal of success in sustaining the peace. Unfortunately it is another six years before Angela can take her retirement, which lasts five, relatively sedentary but agreeable years before a massive stroke suddenly takes her life.<sup>342</sup>

When one considers Angela's case, it does not seem as if she acted in her self-interest; that is, she is not prudentially better off having taken the job instead of retiring early. Had Angela retired earlier her life would have been more pleasant,

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<sup>340</sup> I borrow this example from: Haybron, D. (2007). Well-Being and Virtue. *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 2(2), 1–27. P. 8-9.

<sup>341</sup> That is, she has already given her country a great deal; no one would begrudge her the comfortable life she had begun to set before herself.

<sup>342</sup> This is a time and manner of death that would have been the same had she not taken the job.

substantially happier, and she would have been pursuing those activities that most appeal to her and bring her the greatest satisfaction (i.e. those activities which she most values). Otherwise put, this course of action would have contributed more to her well-being.<sup>343</sup> It appears, however, that Perfectionist theories like Hurka's are committed to the view that Angela is better off having taken the job because by any reasonable measure the diplomatic assignment involves greater perfection in virtue of its involving more of the exercise, development, and perfection of Angela's distinctively human capacities.<sup>344</sup> That is, while a life of pleasant and relaxing retirement has its own perfections, e.g. the perfection involved in say, cultivating and deepening friendships, casually pursuing one's hobbies, etc., there is no credible sense, non-moral or otherwise, in which Angela or her activities would exhibit more excellence on the whole if she retired. Compare, for example, the capacities exercised (and perfected) in, say, negotiating a peace settlement with a divided war-torn government versus going on long walks in the evening with one's spouse or enjoying small talk over dinner with good friends. While the latter activities may involve less of the perfection of one's distinctively human capacities, it is easy to imagine that nearer the end of one's life, and after a fruitful career, one would value them more. Accordingly, Perfectionism is flawed to the extent that it must diagnose individuals' like Angela as being (prudentially) better off having exercised and developed (i.e. *perfected*) their mature capacities<sup>345</sup> regardless of what this exercise and development does to the quality of their lives *for them*, i.e. its prudential value. Ultimately then,

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<sup>343</sup> One way to interpret this case is that Angela decided that moral considerations (e.g. many people might die in this conflict and she can do something about it even if it makes her life worse) trumped prudential considerations (e.g. had Angela been solely thinking about her own interests, she would have chosen to retire early).

<sup>344</sup> More specifically, while a life of pleasant retirement has its own perfections, there is no credible sense, non-moral or otherwise, in which Angela or her activities would exhibit more excellence on the whole if she retired.

<sup>345</sup> I.e. the relevant aspects of her "human essence."

Perfectionist theories of well-being are implausible because there is *no necessary* connection between an individual's exercising and developing his distinctively *human* capacities and the enhancement of, or contribution to, his well-being (*qua* person). For instance, were one attracted to well-being as self-realization, what an individual's self-realization consists in may perfect one's capacities to a high degree, a small degree, or a negligible one. Consequently, there is no reason to think that there is a necessary and meaningful relationship between the two metrics: the development and perfection of one's human essence and one's self-realization. What's more, as Angela's case demonstrates, the exercise and perfection of one's distinctively human capacities may actually detract from one's well-being in almost every way measurable. By maintaining that our self-realization neither requires the perfection or development of our "human nature" nor does it have to tackle the task of defining our "human essence" well-being as self-realization avoids the serious problems that undermine the viability of Well-Being Perfectionism.

#### **2.4 Neo-Aristotelian Eudaimonist Theories: Right Approach, Wrong Class**

Arguably the most popular type of species-based objective theory is an Aristotelian Eudaimonist approach. This is the approach favored by, for example, Philippa Foot and Rosalind Hursthouse. Foot and Hursthouse both argue that when evaluating an individual's actions or level of well-being as being "good" or not, good ought to be understood as functioning as an "attributive" adjective.<sup>346</sup> In being an attributive adjective, one cannot determine whether or not something is "good," or what something's good<sup>347</sup> consists in, without considering that thing as being a member of a certain kind. That is, in order to understand what makes for a good F, or what is good for some particular F, one must understand F's nature and the nature of

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<sup>346</sup> Foot, P. *Natural Goodness* (Oxford; 2003); Hursthouse, R., *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>347</sup> I.e. what is *good for* it.



its well-being. Foot and Hursthouse call such goodness “intrinsic” or “natural” goodness and insist that it *need not have anything to do with the needs or wants of any particular members of any species*. Such goodness is “autonomous” in that it depends directly on the relation of an individual to the “life form” of its species.

Foot and Hursthouse’s accounts of an individual’s good court worries about alienation and fail to capture the subjective intuition. That is, in not having anything to do with the needs, wants, or values of any particular individual, “autonomous goodness” is a conception of prudential good that ignores persons’ idiosyncratic/evaluative makeups and evaluative perspectives, i.e. what they are like, including what they value, thereby offering an account of their good that they may be alienated from. Further, even if one ignores worries about alienation, there are several other problems with evaluating or defining the constituents of our well-being against the species-based model of “natural goodness” for humans. To begin with, there may be competing standards for evaluating the natural goodness of a member of a given kind or type of living thing. Hursthouse is aware of this and argues that her list of goals and criteria for natural evaluation<sup>348</sup> is privileged because of its “scientific status;” i.e. its being grounded in the natural sciences. Appealing to her account’s “scientific status” is not, however, without its difficulties. This is because there are several different ways of approaching the scientific study of, for example, animal kinds, so that there are correspondingly many different conceptions of what makes an animal a good instance of its kind.<sup>349</sup> For example, an evolutionary biologist may evaluate animals according to how successfully they maximize their expected genetic

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<sup>348</sup> Specifically, she asserts that we should evaluate living things’ parts, operations/reactions, actions, and emotion/desires, with respect to how they contribute to three ends: (1) the individual’s survival, (2) the continuance of the species, and (3) the individual’s characteristic pleasure or enjoyment/characteristic freedom from pain. ‘Social’ animals are also evaluated with respect to how they contribute to a further end: (4) the good functioning of the social group.

<sup>349</sup> Copp, David & Sobel, David; ‘Morality and Virtue: An Assessment of Some Recent Work in Virtue Ethics’ *Ethics* Vol. 114, No.3 April 2004. pp. 514-544, p. 534.

contribution to future generations while a veterinarian who, like doctors that are concerned about humans' health, evaluates animals according to their own well-being.<sup>350</sup> In light of these competing standards, Hursthouse cannot justify her claim that the list of criteria that she believes one ought to evaluate animals (like ourselves) against is the standard that would result from a scientific evaluation that was aimed at evaluating animals *qua* member of their species. However, without an adequate model to compare animals against, one cannot analogize the case of humans to that of animals, thereby undercutting the viability of approaches like Foot and Hursthouse's which attempt to employ some sort of "grand analogy" with which they could evaluate what is good for humans by employing the model of what is good for animals. This is in addition to the fact that even if one were to grant that an intelligible and authoritative evaluation of an animal *qua* member of its kind could be given, one still needs to justify why that animals' *species* is the proper kind to focus on.<sup>351</sup> That is, even if we could consider our well-being *qua* human, I have given several reasons, e.g. worries about alienation, why this ought not be considered the unique standpoint from which we ought to evaluate or determine the constituents of our well-being; we should consider our well-being *qua* person.

An individual's being autonomous is essential to that individual's being a person. In light of this, if one thinks, as Hursthouse, Foot, and other Neo-Aristotelians do, that the sort of autonomy essential to our well-being is exercised through our practical reasoning, making choices, living with the implications of those choices, and

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<sup>350</sup> More concretely, a veterinarian would negatively view a behavior like alarm calling, because it puts the animal's life at risk, while Hursthouse appears committed to such an activity's being virtuous because it contributes to the good functioning or the survival of the group to which the animal belongs.

<sup>351</sup> Otherwise put, one needs to justify why, even if it is conceded that one can find the normative in the natural, we should look to the evaluation of the individual as a member of some particular species, as Hursthouse would have us do, rather than, for example, the bearer of a specific genotype, member of a local herd or population, member of a genus, or, as I believe we ought to, as a member of a volitional and psychological kind (Copp & Sobel, 2004).

responding to norms and reasons, then an objective theory of well-being ought not appeal to the class “humanity” as a means of explaining why this is so. Further, consider the fact that there are many humans who do not possess these capacities (e.g. the very young, the very old, and those with cognitive deficits) and as such, lack the sort of autonomy constitutive of personhood.<sup>352</sup> Accordingly, if an objective theory of well-being holds that autonomy is important to an individual’s well-being, then it should not focus on humans (or any *species* for that matter). It should focus on persons, an irreducibly normative classification, and the class for which autonomy is constitutive and characteristic. The irreducible normativity of the class “persons”<sup>353</sup> is important because it demonstrates why a focus on persons (as opposed to “humans”) is ideally suited to capture well-being’s putative normativity. An important upshot of this, and a central thesis of this dissertation, is that the standards that the preceding classes, i.e. the human species and persons, provide for judgments of well-being<sup>354</sup> are distinct, and further that our judgments about them are incommensurable. Our judgments about an individual’s well-being *qua* person and *qua* member of the human species are incommensurable because they are made against different standards: one which is *particular*, i.e. a particular individual’s idiosyncratic (evaluative) makeup, and one which is *general*, an account of what “human well-being” consists in. Accordingly, there is no sense in which an individual has an overall or cumulative well-being level.<sup>355</sup>

Ultimately, species-based objective theories attempt to give an account of *human* well-being by relying upon substantive accounts of both human nature and the characteristic “good life” for humans. There is good reason to think that such

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<sup>352</sup> Relatedly, as I argued in the first chapter the classes “humans” and “persons” are distinct because they have different characteristic properties and persistence conditions.

<sup>353</sup> I.e. the concept “person.”

<sup>354</sup> E.g. constitution and evaluative judgments.

<sup>355</sup> I explore this idea more thoroughly in the conclusion.

accounts will inevitably be quite idiosyncratic and raise serious worries about alienation thereby rendering such theories unable to capture the subjective intuition. In particular, whatever one's theory posits as the constituents of "the good life" for humans, there are likely to be serious objections to why those particular items (and not others) belong on the list of "distinctively human goods." In light of this, to the extent that an objective theory seeks to avoid raising worries about alienation and wishes to capture the subjective intuition, it ought to adopt my approach and focus on that class of beings for whom the sort of autonomy they are concerned with is characteristic: persons.

#### *2.4.1 Our Well-Being qua Human: Developmentalism*

The last objective theory of well-being I consider is Richard Kraut's "Developmentalism." I consider Kraut last because I believe that Developmentalism provides the most compelling account of our well-being *qua* human compared to all of the other objective theories I have considered thus far. As such, his theory is able to offer intuitively compelling judgments concerning flourishing and deprivation in a variety of cases, perhaps more so than well-being as self-realization. Further, the way in which he formulates Developmentalism, i.e. the broad way in which he understands those capacities whose development is prudentially valuable, is able to avoid *some* worries about alienation. After all, most individuals' self-realization will involve the exercise and development of those capacities we have *qua* human. That being said, because Kraut does not give our capacity for autonomy<sup>356</sup> the due weight or role that it deserves in determinations of our good, his theory is unable to recognize the active role that individuals play in determination of their good. While an individual's good *qua* person may be partly extensionally equivalent with an individual's good *qua*

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<sup>356</sup> I.e. the capacity that is constitutive of our existence *qua* person.

human, there are important cases in which Developmentalism and well-being as self-realization will offering different verdicts about individuals' well-being. Ultimately, by deriving an account of our good through a general appeal to the idea that it is good for *any* living thing is to flourishing by developing the capacities characteristic of whatever class it belongs to, Kraut's theory compromises its ability to capture the subjective intuition which thereby diminishes its normative adequacy and authority.<sup>357</sup> This is manifest in three cases in which I maintain that Kraut's Developmentalism offers counter-intuitive verdicts about an individual's good that cannot capture the subjective intuition while well-being as self-realization can. I begin, however, by considering the details of Kraut's Developmentalism.

In *What is Good and Why*<sup>358</sup> Kraut argues that an individual's well-being consists in that individual's "flourishing."<sup>359</sup> Applied to humans, Developmentalism holds that "a flourishing human being is one who possesses, develops, and enjoys the exercise of cognitive, affective, sensory, and social powers."<sup>360</sup> Flourishing, as Kraut understands it, is an entirely biological phenomenon. He maintains that an individual flourishes by their "developing properly and fully, that is, by growing, maturing, making full use of the potentialities, capacities, and faculties that (under favorable conditions) they naturally have at an early stage of their existence"; conversely, "anything that impedes the development or the exercise of those mature faculties - disease, the sapping of vigor and strength, injuries, the loss of organs - is bad for them."<sup>361</sup> A corollary of this is that there is one kind of life that is best for all human

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<sup>357</sup> Otherwise put, because Developmentalism makes judgments about our well-being through appeal to the standard set by our species, it can neither capture the nature of our well-being *qua* person (which we have in virtue of our capacity for autonomy) nor does it appreciate the fact that our nature *qua* human and *qua* person are incommensurable.

<sup>358</sup> Kraut, Richard *What is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-Being*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

<sup>359</sup> This "individual" could be a plant, animal, human, etc.

<sup>360</sup> Kraut, 2007: p. 138.

<sup>361</sup> Kraut, 2007: p. 131.

beings: a life of flourishing. He acknowledges, however, that the concrete realization of an individual's patterns of development will vary greatly from person to person.

Realizing that the preceding account of well-being is rather vague, Kraut attempts to give greater content to our conception of human well-being by appealing to what he considers to be a "widely accepted framework for thinking about normal human development."<sup>362</sup> More concretely, he maintains that:

It is good for us to receive loving attention as children, to acquire linguistic competence and the ability to communicate with others, to grow physically and make use of our sensory capacities, to mature sexually, to learn the complex social skills of adulthood, to enrich and develop greater mastery over our emotions, to learn how to assess reasons and deliberate with an independent and open mind, and thus to interact with others as full members of the community.<sup>363</sup>

Relatedly, Kraut argues that it is part of the broad contouring of human life that our powers decline as we age and that this is a loss of well-being. This, he asserts, is because aging involves, for instance, physical enfeeblement, loss of memory, and the constriction of an individual's social and intellectual skills. Importantly, and this is especially relevant because it demonstrates how Developmentalism begins to court worries about alienation, Kraut maintains that as an individual ages he suffers a loss to his well-being *even if* his desires have changed with such aging in a way which is rational, properly informed, and fully satisfied. That is, even if what an individual values changes as he ages, to the extent that the realization of these values involves less of the development and exercise of an individual's distinctively human capacities, that individual suffers a loss to his well-being. This threatens Developmentalism's ability to capture the subjective intuition because it demonstrates how what an individual values can diverge from what the development (or decline) of that individual's characteristic human capacities consists in.

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<sup>362</sup> Kraut, 2007: p. 138.

<sup>363</sup> Kraut, 2007: p. 138.

As Kraut sees it, Developmentalism is an attempt to answer two types of questions. First, “What is it for something to be good for someone?” and second, “Which things are good in this way?”<sup>364</sup> The first question asks for an explanatory account of well-being while the second seeks an enumerative account. To the first question Developmentalism responds: what it is for something to be good for someone is for it to be productive or part of an individual’s flourishing. For the second, it offers whatever the flourishing consists in for some particular species. Again, for human beings, it maintains that humans’ flourishing consists in the maturation and exercise of certain cognitive, social, affective, and physical skills.<sup>365</sup> Kraut argues that Developmentalism is able to answer the enumerative question quite handily because “we are filled with concrete, developmental ideas about what is good or bad for people - developmental in that what lies behind these ideas is the assumption that it is good for us to put into action the psychological and physical skills we began to acquire as children.”<sup>366</sup> Conversely, he considers any deficits one has in those capacities or skills to be an unmitigated loss to one’s well-being because, he holds, one’s distinctively human capacities help one achieve one’s ends. An upshot of this is that what someone who is ideally informed/rational/etc. seeks, desires, etc. can nonetheless be (prudentially) bad for him if it does not promote his flourishing.

In the last chapter I argued that objective theories of well-being appear well-suited to explain and justify our judgments concerning whether an individual is leading a “full,” i.e. *flourishing* life, e.g. one replete with the goods that, say, humans typically enjoy, and, correspondingly, why it is unfortunate when an individual experiences a *deprivation* by lacking any of the goods contained within such a life. As Kraut rightly notes, one of Developmentalism’s key theoretical virtues is that it is able

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<sup>364</sup> Kraut, 2007: p. 141.

<sup>365</sup> Kraut, 2007: p. 141.

<sup>366</sup> Kraut, 2007: p. 142.

to systematize and explain our commonsense intuitions about what is good for a human and that it does this within a convincing broader framework that explains what is good for all living things. Accordingly, Kraut's Developmentalism provides us with a standard against which we can make intuitively compelling judgments about our flourishing and deprivation *qua* human. Further, I believe this to be a far more promising approach than the various strategies pursued by brute-list theories or Foot and Hursthouse's so-called "scientific" naturalistic approaches. An important lacuna of Kraut's approach, however, is his overlooking our capacity for autonomy and the important role that it plays in the constitution of our well-being *qua* person. This, along with his dismissing the importance of an individual's evaluative perspective<sup>367</sup> in determinations of what is good for that individual, causes Kraut's theory to court alienation worries and threatens its ability to adequately capture the subjective intuition.

#### 2.4.2 *The Gap Between Development, Exercise, and the Good Life*

I want to offer three cases that I believe vividly demonstrate the theoretical problems facing Kraut's Developmentalism. The first problem concerns whether or not Developmentalism is a form of Well-Being Perfectionism and, as such, faces the problems that challenge Perfectionist approaches. The second problem stems from Kraut's assertion that as individuals' age and as their capacities diminish<sup>368</sup> they necessarily experience a diminishment in their well-being regardless of whether their evaluative makeup adapts with this aging. Finally, when it comes to some putative "deprivations," whether or not an individual experiences a loss to his well-being because of some putative deprivation seems to be dependent upon that individual's

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<sup>367</sup> While, to be fair, Kraut does impose an "enjoyment" condition of prudential value, this is different in kind from an evaluative/endorsement constraint in that it makes no appeal to an individual's evaluative makeup and perspective, i.e. what he values. That is, valuing is not the same thing as enjoying.

<sup>368</sup> I.e. as they are exercised less, are not longer positively developing, etc.



idiosyncratic/evaluative makeup and not whether that individual's flourishing is frustrated.

Regarding the first point, imagine the following scenario:

*Teddy the Trust Fund Kid:* Teddy was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. That is, while he was growing up he never wanted for anything and his parents gave into his every whim (equestrian lessons, multiple musical instruments, several expensive cars, you name it). Currently he is nearing the end of his late twenties after having taken eight years to get a bachelors degree at an Ivy League school (he was a legacy admission), and while his trust fund provides him with a hefty monthly income, his parents want him to go into the family business, they manage several hedge funds. Teddy, however, has other plans. That is, he hates "business stuff"<sup>369</sup> and thinks that the financial wizardry his parents' company engages in is a waste of time. The only things he cares about, i.e. values, is hanging out on the beach (his parents bought him a small condo on Daytona Beach), drinking beers and smoking weed, and listening to records with friends. Despite his parents making several attempts to get Teddy to join the family business, or at least do something besides partying and being a beach bum, he resolutely values what he does.

In this case Teddy has a choice between a situation in which he could take up a demanding career which would require him to exercise and develop some of his distinctively human capacities (e.g. social, cognitive, etc.) or one in which he settles into the life of a beach bum. Any analysis of this case should begin by conceding that each option would involve the exercise and development of Teddy's distinctively human capacities; that is either option will contribute (somewhat) to his well-being. That being said, it seems fair to say that his staying with family and working in the family business would perfect these capacities to a higher degree than being a beach bum. Accordingly, Kraut appears committed to the view that this course of action would be more prudentially valuable for Teddy than the other. The problem with this view is that, like Perfectionist approaches, it completely ignores Teddy's evaluative makeup, i.e. what he values, in determinations of what is prudentially valuable for him. In Developmentalism's downplaying the importance of Teddy's evaluative

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<sup>369</sup> That is, even if he thinks that he could come to enjoy it over time; he hates the thought that he would change so much just to deal with the situation.

makeup in determinations of what is prudentially valuable for him, it is not able to capture what each option would be like from Teddy's perspective, i.e. his lived experience. After all, regardless of the fact that working in his family's business would involve more of the exercise of development of his human capacities, this option is not what he values more, but something he would only do because of, say, his parents browbeating.

Teddy's case vividly demonstrates the difference between Kraut's Developmentalism and well-being as self-realization. While Kraut can recognize that Teddy's capacities are exercised no matter what option he pursues,<sup>370</sup> his theory courts worries about alienation to the extent that it does not recognize the role that what Teddy values plays in determinations of Teddy's good. That is, it cannot appreciate that insofar as Teddy values his beach bum life and its constituent elements, i.e. relaxation, leisure, good times with friends, the realization of these values contributes more to his well-being than his developing and exercising his human capacities as he works to grow his parents' business. Ultimately then, to the extent that Kraut's Developmentalism maintains that Teddy is better off, i.e. has a higher level of well-being, the more he exercises and develops his characteristically human capacities regardless of what Teddy's values, it offers a conception of individuals' well-being that they are quite possibly alienated from and that cannot capture the subjective intuition. To the extent that it does this, its normative adequacy and authority are compromised.

When it comes to what Developmentalism says about individual's level of well-being as they age I think that Kraut is half right. More specifically, when it comes to individuals who do not yet have the cognitive capacities constitutive of

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<sup>370</sup> That is, hanging out with friends and listening to music would involve the development of his capacities and to the extent that they do, they are good for him.

personhood, e.g. babies, toddlers, etc., i.e. individuals who are not yet fully persons, Developmentalism delivers intuitively compelling verdicts about what is good or bad for them. Things change, however, once individuals are autonomous *persons* and can reflect upon the exercise, development, and perfection of their distinctively human capacities or activities that involve them. That is, they can value them or not and this is what determines the constituents of that individual's well-being *qua* person.

That being said, at the opposite end of the spectrum, when individuals are nearer the end of their lives and their distinctively human capacities are fading, this is not the case. Remember, Kraut is committed to the view that as individuals age their distinctively human capacities diminish<sup>371</sup> their level of well-being necessarily diminishes. Before arguing against this claim I want to begin by noting that there is an important disanalogy when comparing our well-being at the beginning of life and nearer the end of our lives. Namely, at the beginning of our lives we simply do not have the capacities constitutive of personhood. As such, our well-being can only be considered *qua* human. On the opposite end of our lives, however, an individual's well-being can be considered both *qua* human and *qua* person. Accordingly, while I am willing to concede that as an individual ages their well-being *qua* human (for which Developmentalism provides a compelling standard) may decrease, this need not be the case for that individual's well-being *qua* person, the standard which offers more intuitively compelling verdicts about an individual's level of well-being.

It ought to be noted that in maintaining that individuals experience a decrease in their level of well-being as they age, Kraut is in line with what many have intuitively thought:

On an intuitive level, common sense dictates that well-being should decrease among older individuals, not least because health diminishes substantially. That is, advancing age compromises not only physical but

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<sup>371</sup> I.e. are exercised less, are no longer positively developing, etc.

also mental capabilities. On the whole, individuals are not as self-sufficient as in their younger years. They exit the labour market and depend on fixed pensions that limit the amount of financial resources at their disposal, and as they frequently experience the death of friends and loved ones, they become more socially isolated.<sup>372</sup>

Accordingly, Kraut's view is very much in line with what many people think about the link between aging (and especially old age) and individuals' level of well-being. That being said, a number of psychological studies are beginning to show that individuals' well-being seems to be unaffected by the adverse contexts brought on by the aging process.<sup>373</sup> There are several hypotheses that seek to explain this phenomenon, I will consider two: the "socio-emotional selectivity theory" and the "selection, optimization, and compensation theory."

The socio-emotional selectivity theory<sup>374</sup> argues that individuals experience more life satisfaction as age increases because, with passing time and shrinking time horizons, they spend more time in activities that contribute to their well-being instead of pursuing goals that are expected to contribute to their happiness at some future point. In addition, older people tend to have fewer but more rewarding social contacts, which allows them to better control their emotional health.<sup>375</sup> In contrast to Developmentalism, which maintains that as individuals age their levels of well-being decreases, well-being as self-realization appears well-suited to explain why individuals' level of well-being adjusts accordingly. That is, as individuals get older and are confronted with their mortality they are often forced to confront, and ideally clearly perceive, what they really care about, i.e. what they value. While it did not

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<sup>372</sup> Williams, A. (1977). Measuring the Quality of Life of the Elderly. In A. Wingo & L. Evans (Eds.), *Public Economics and the Quality of Life* p. 282–297.

<sup>373</sup> See: Mroczek, D., & Kolarz, C. (1998). The effect of age on positive and negative affect: a developmental perspective on happiness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75(5). p. 1333.

<sup>374</sup> See: Charles, S. T., & Carstensen, L. L. (2009). Socioemotional Selectivity Theory In H. Reis, & S. Sprecher (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships* p. 1578-1581. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

<sup>375</sup> See: Berg, A., Hassing, L., McClearn, G., & Johansson, B. (2006). What matters for life satisfaction in the oldest old? *Ageing and Mental Health*, 10(3), p. 257–264.

involve aging, this is what happened in Theodore's case in section 2.2.4: being confronted with one's mortality can either allow one to more clearly see what one values or it can cause one to reevaluate what matters in one's life. This can be brought on by something like an unexpected health diagnosis or within the normal course of aging. Something related happens in the social realm: as individuals get older they are limited to focusing on (and possibly deciding which) relationships they value the most.

The second model, the "selection, optimization, and compensation" model, maintains that "successful aging encompasses *selection* of functional domains on which to focus one's resources, *optimizing* developmental potential (maximization of gains) and *compensating* for losses – thus ensuring the maintenance of functioning and a minimization of losses."<sup>376</sup> Put more simply, as individuals age they adapt to their circumstances and their level of well-being stays constant or increases, contra what Developmentalism maintains. Again, I submit that well-being as self-realization is well-equipped to explain this. That is, as individuals age and their circumstances change, what they value, or how much they value something, will rationally change insofar as individuals seek to strategically realize their values as much as they can. Now, I do not cite either of these models in order to disprove, discredit, or entirely undermine Developmentalism as a theory of well-being. Instead, I cite them in order to demonstrate that it appears to be the case that as individuals age they experience their level of well-being as increasing and that well-being as self-realization seems able to explain this phenomenon far better than Developmentalism, which does not appear able to explain it at all. Accordingly, the onus is upon Kraut to argue why

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<sup>376</sup> See: Freund, A., & Baltes, P. (2002). The Adaptiveness of Selection, Optimization, and Compensation as Strategies of Life Management: Evidence From a Preference Study on Proverbs. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 57B(5), p. 426–434.

older individuals are mistaken or why their evaluative perspectives ought to be discounted when we are evaluating their well-being. Without this account Developmentalism appears committed to offering an alienating conception of many older persons' well-being.

Setting aside worries about alienation, I want to again acknowledge that Developmentalism appears quite well-suited to capture our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation. After all, it defines an individual's well-being in terms of flourishing! That being said, I believe that well-being as self-realization is able to capture some important nuances concerning our experience of certain putative that Developmentalism cannot. Take, for example, our capacity for sight. Developmentalism is committed to the view that any individual who lacks this capacity is necessarily either experiencing a pro-tanto well-being loss or that this deprivation amounts to an overall worsening of that individual's level of well-being because he lacks a characteristic human capacity and good. One might worry that without an appeal to the standard set by some species, well-being as self-realization cannot capture the nuance in this sort of case, i.e. that it cannot distinguish between pro-tanto well-being losses and overall losses to an individual's well-being. I, however, believe that not only can it capture this nuance, but also that it can also capture certain nuances in other cases that Developmentalism cannot. In order to illustrate how well-being as self-realization can explain the nuances within our experience of certain deprivations one can look to Jorge Luis Borges' essay "Blindness."<sup>377</sup>

In "Blindness" Borges tells the story of what he calls his "modest" blindness, "modest" in that it is "total blindness in one eye, but only partial in the other...I can

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<sup>377</sup> Borges, J. L. (1999). 'Blindness.' In E. Weinberger (Ed.), *Selected Non-Fictions* (p. 473-483). All references to Borges are from this work. Bradford Cokelet suggested this example to me.

still see blue and green...and yellow, in particular, has remained faithful to me.”<sup>378</sup> As Borges recounts his gradually going blind he describes how losing the world of appearances helped him to rediscover his love for Anglo-Saxon literature and gave him an intellectual discipline and freedom he had not had before so that “blindness has not been for me a total misfortune; it should not be seen in a pathetic way. It should be seen as a way of life: one of the styles of living.”<sup>379</sup> Developmentalism appears committed to its being the case that in virtue of his blindness Borges is experiencing an overall lessening of his well-being. In contrast, well-being as self-realization can appreciate more nuance in situations such as Borges. Specifically, while Borges may be experiencing some level of deprivation because his idiosyncratic make-up (i.e. his values) is such that he desires to be able to experience and appreciate visual beauty,<sup>380</sup> this deprivation’s severity might be mitigated by Borges’ coming to appreciate the opportunities and abilities which blindness, a putative deprivation, affords him. What’s more, as time goes by he may even see this deprivation, and the opportunities and abilities that it affords him, as part of “who he is” and may even get happiness out of it, thereby changing his idiosyncratic make-up and self-conception.<sup>381</sup> Considering this, it appears that for some individual persons, certain deprivations an individual might be experiencing *qua* human can become “gifts” or, more likely, valued parts of that individual’s identity (*qua* person) or self-

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<sup>378</sup> Borges, 1999: p. 474.

<sup>379</sup> Borges, 1999: p. 478.

<sup>380</sup> I.e. he values those things for which sight is instrumental.

<sup>381</sup> Following his account of going blind, Borges describes several prominent historical writers, e.g. Homer, Milton, Groussac, and Joyce, for whom going blind was also not a total misfortune or deprivation either because it allowed them newfound focus or improved their memory and/or productivity, and who credited their work to their blindness and its accompanying advantages. In light of the fact that so many writers produced their best work either as they were going blind or had already lost their sight, and who often speak positively about their lacking sight, Borges describes blindness as ‘a way of life that is not entirely unfortunate.’ He argues that for artists blindness is not a total misfortune because it creates a new aspect of their lives which it is ‘given for us to transform, so that we [artists] may make from the miserable circumstances of our lives things that are eternal, or aspire to be so’ so that ‘if a blind man thinks this way, he is saved. Blindness is a gift’ (Borges, 482)

concept, which thereby mitigate that deprivation's severity, depending, of course, upon that individual's evaluative make-up and judgments of these deprivations. Well-being as self-realization is able to capture this nuance because of its emphasis on the active role one takes in shaping and defining one's idiosyncratic make-up, including the constituents of one's well-being.

One can imagine, however, cases more "extreme" than Borges' in which a species-based theory like Developmentalism delivers counter-intuitive verdicts about individuals' well-being while well-being as self-realization is able to capture important nuances concerning individuals' experience of particular putative deprivations. Take, for instance, something like "close personal relationships." Now Kraut maintains that part of our flourishing involves certain relationships like "loving" relationships.<sup>382</sup> Such relationships, Kraut maintains, are good for an individual regardless of his orientation toward it. Imagine, however, a religious hermit whose sole aim and joy in life is the quiet contemplation of God's nature. Considering the nature of this activity, one can easily imagine that the quality of the hermit's life, i.e. his level of well-being, would not improve were he to have close personal relationships in his life. In fact, having such relationships might actually distract him from the main activity<sup>383</sup> that contributes to his well-being, thereby making his life worse.<sup>384</sup> Because "close personal relationships" are widely considered essential to a good human life, Developmentalism is committed to the hermit's experiencing some loss to his well-being because of his solitude.<sup>385</sup> However, considering that the hermit experiences no diminishment in the quality of his life because of this lack, and

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<sup>382</sup> Kraut, 2007: p. 162.

<sup>383</sup> I.e. value whose realization.

<sup>384</sup> That is, because love or friendship might contribute to his well-being less than the good(s) they are precluding.

<sup>385</sup> Again, this loss could be either a pro-tanto worsening of his well-being or an overall loss to well-being.



further, were this lack filled, the quality of his life would actually decrease, Developmentalism seems committed to a rather counter-intuitive view. The upshot of this is that whether or not an individual fully expresses his *human* nature by being able to engage in a particular sort of relationship is not necessarily relevant to his well-being *qua* person. More generally, not all of those things that species-based theories like Developmentalism would consider deprivations to our well-being, either pro-tanto or overall, are necessarily detrimental to our well-being *qua* person.

There may, however, be lingering skepticism concerning well-being as self-realization's maintaining that a person's well-being is determined by what that person values to the extent that what are typically considered deprivations (*qua* human) may not be such for some individuals considered *qua* person. It is my belief, however, that this intuition is only so deeply entrenched because so many of the persons that we are typically focused on have similar make-ups. Turning back to sight, it just so happens to be the case that the vast majority of the persons we focus on are humans who get pleasure, happiness, and, more generally, their well-being contributed to by things like: *visual* beauty, *seeing* their loved ones, and other goods for which *sight* is instrumental. However, the fact that so many persons' well-being are enhanced through their seeing various things does not mean that this capacity and exercises of it are a necessary constituent of persons' well-being. Consider, for example, one who is an extreme audiophile; that is, one who gets the vast majority (if not all) of his well-being from, say, listening to music. Considering the nature of this individual's idiosyncratic makeup, it does not seem that if he were deprived of the characteristic human capacity for sight he would experience either a pro-tanto or overall loss to his well-being. While blindness may not necessarily contribute to such an individual's well-being, such a deprivation need not necessarily detract from it either; our

audiophile might feel as if nothing is missing from his life because of his inability to see. Perhaps, it may even sharpen his auditory abilities such that he is glad it happened and thinks himself (and actually is) better off for it. What this demonstrates is that one's idiosyncratic make-up might make it such that a putative deprivation (*qua* human) is part of one's valued idiosyncratic make-up (*qua* person) so that it ought not be considered a deprivation at all, either pro-tanto or overall.

Insofar as one seeks to make intuitively compelling judgments about our well-being *qua* human, they would be well-served in employing Kraut's Developmentalism. First and foremost, Developmentalism is extremely well suited to make intuitively compelling judgments about our flourishing and deprivation. Further, this account is able to avoid *some* worries about alienation by stipulating that the concrete pattern in which an individual develops and exercises his distinctively human capacities can be quite broad. That being said, in downplaying the importance of an individual's evaluative makeup, perspective, and capacity for autonomy (including the role it plays in an individual's shaping and defining the constituents of its well-being) it is unable to adequately capture our well-being *qua* person and offers an alienating conception of an individual's good. Accordingly, while I believe that Developmentalism is the most attractive objective theory I have considered it still succumbs to the problems that threaten such approaches' normative adequacy and authority. In light of this I want to turn to subjective theories of well-being whose putative theoretical asset is their ability to capture the subjective intuition, avoid worries about alienation, and, ideally, offer normatively authoritative accounts of our well-being.

## Chapter Three: Hedonist Theories of Well-Being

“Everyone praises the endurance of the ascetic, but no one appreciates the stamina of the hedonist. To laugh until the throat burns and smoke a cigar to soothe it, to black out but not pass out, to love without climax, to be immortal in the moment – what stoic has such fortitude?”

-Bauvard, *The Darkness of Nature*

### 3.1 Introductory Remarks

Thus far I have demonstrated how well-being as self-realization can capture the other (predominantly species-based) objective theories’ main strength, i.e. explaining and justifying our judgments about flourishing and deprivation in several cases (as well as capturing importance nuances in our experience of them), while avoiding these theories’ inability to capture the subjective intuition and their tendency for courting worries about alienation. Turning away from objective theories, the first subjective theory I want to critically examine is Hedonism, the view that an individual’s well-being consists in that individual’s experiencing a greater balance of pleasure over pain. Before considering various formulations of hedonism it is worth noting that there is some debate about how one ought to classify hedonism. On the one hand, hedonism appears to be a paradigmatically subjective theory of well-being; after all, what an individual gets pleasure out of varies from individual to individual and depends on an individual’s idiosyncratic makeup. On the other hand, hedonism stipulates that pleasure is good for an individual *regardless of that individual’s orientation toward it*, i.e. regardless of whether that individual values, desires or has some sort of pro-attitude toward the pleasure he is experiencing. This makes hedonism appear to be an objective theory of well-being; in fact some objective-list theorist have argued that one can think of hedonism as being an objective-list theory whose list only has one item: pleasure. Luckily for me, whether or not hedonism ought to be understood as an objective or subjective theory of well-being has no bearing on what I believe to be hedonism’s serious theoretical shortcomings. For ease

of exposition I consider hedonism as a subjective theory that is committed to the view that only thing that is intrinsically prudentially valuable is pleasure and the only thing that is an intrinsically prudentially disvaluable is pain.

Prima facie, because what an individual gets pleasure out of depends upon *what that individual is like*, hedonism ought to be well-suited to capture the subjective intuition and avoid worries about alienation thereby allowing it to make compelling judgments about our well-being. As I hope to demonstrate, however, this is not the case. This is because regardless of how a hedonist conceives of pleasure, individuals typically<sup>386</sup> value more than merely experiencing pleasure. Accordingly, to the extent that hedonism maintains that pleasure is the *only thing* that is intrinsically prudentially valuable for a person, it cannot capture the subjective intuition and offers an alienating conception of an individual's good thereby robbing it of normative authority. Relatedly, hedonism cannot explain the non-derivative importance that an individual's evaluative perspective and makeup *qua* person plays in an account of what is good for him. Further, hedonism's sole focus on pleasure renders it unable to either offer compelling judgments about flourishing and deprivation or capture autonomy's centrality to both personhood and our well-being *qua* person. That being said, in this chapter I demonstrate the ways in which well-being as self-realization can recognize hedonism's main insight, that pleasure can (and often does) positively contribute to an individual's well-being.<sup>387</sup> In particular, I specify the conditions under which pleasure is prudentially valuable.<sup>388</sup>

I begin my consideration of hedonism with a *general* overview of its understanding of prudential value. This includes, as one might imagine, examining

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<sup>386</sup> Or, almost assuredly.

<sup>387</sup> While I do not discuss it in this chapter, in the last chapter I consider "happiness" putative prudential value. As we will see, there is good reason not to treat happiness as being synonymous with pleasure.

<sup>388</sup> I.e. when an individual values experiencing pleasure.

various conceptions of the nature of “pleasure,” what hedonists take to be the sole (intrinsic) contributor to individuals’ well-being. Hedonist theories of well-being come in two major types that correspond to two different understandings of the nature of pleasure. Either they take pleasure to be a type of *sensation* or a sort of *attitude*. For each type of hedonism, “sensational” or “attitudinal,” I consider a theorist who, I believe, offers a particularly strong version of that type of hedonism. First, I consider Roger Crisp’s sensation model of hedonism; second, I look at Fred Feldman’s attitudinal hedonism. As I demonstrate, neither theorist adequately captures the subjective intuition, avoids offering an alienating conception of an individual’s good, or captures other important theoretical conditions of adequacy for a theory of well-being.

### 3.2 Overview of Hedonism

Theoretically, there are two major types of hedonism: descriptive and normative/prudential hedonism. Descriptive hedonism is, as one might imagine, a descriptive thesis that states that all of our intentional actions are aimed at pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. By itself, this thesis is rather dubious. That is, putatively, individuals rationally pursue a variety of courses of action that they know will not provide them with more pleasure or allow them to avoid pain, yet they choose such actions nonetheless. In contrast, evaluative/prudential<sup>389</sup> hedonism holds that an individual’s well-being consists solely in that individual’s experiencing pleasure and the greater the balance of pleasure over pain, the better off (prudentially) the individual is. This commitment, typically accompanied by an appeal to pleasure’s intuitive appeal, is what hedonism’s *explanatory* theory of well-being consists in while its *enumerative* account(s) typically hold that things like actions, achievements,

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<sup>389</sup> Henceforth my sole focus will be this sort of hedonism, which I simply refer to as “hedonism.”

personal relationships, knowledge, virtue, etc. often contribute to an individual's well-being, but only to the extent that they cause pleasure and/or diminish pain.

Hedonists, in order to defend their assertion that pleasure is the sole intrinsic prudential good, often argue that pleasure is a particularly attractive candidate for the only thing which is *intrinsically* prudentially valuable because it is the only thing that (putatively) everyone can consider to be good (i.e. prudentially valuable) while other putative goods<sup>390</sup> prudential value is at least somewhat controversial.<sup>391</sup> One of the reasons that hedonists offer for this “lack of controversy” is the fact that what makes pleasure good is simply its “pleasantness” and what makes pain bad is its “painfulness;” there is no more fundamental explanation. Accordingly, hedonists maintain that hedonism is theoretically attractive due to pleasure's “brute” intuitive appeal. Even in this, its most basic form, hedonism has some superficial appeal. That is, when one considers what makes an individual's life go well, pleasure, which individuals can get from a variety of sources (and which typically depend upon what that individual is like) seems like a suitable candidate. After all, most people find pleasure to be prudentially valuable and insofar as one wants to capture the idea underlying the subjective intuition, i.e. that something can only contribute to an individual's well-being if he is positively oriented toward it, this seems like a good way to do it.

In addition to appealing to pleasure's intuitive appeal as an intrinsic prudential value, hedonists often advocate for their theories by offering broadly reductionist arguments that aim to explain or justify in hedonist terms putatively non-hedonist goods or values. For instance, some hedonists assert that because things like honesty,

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<sup>390</sup> E.g. achievement, knowledge, virtue, etc.

<sup>391</sup> In fact, much of this dissertation challenges the intrinsic prudential value of many supposed goods.

achievement, friendship, etc., generally produce pleasure in us,<sup>392</sup> we mistakenly think that they have value of their own<sup>393</sup> independent of how much pleasure they produce. Some hedonists, Roger Crisp for instance, argue that putatively non-hedonic goods are *actually* prudentially valuable because they maximize pleasure. I reject this sort of explanation because many of the goods which hedonists attempt to give reductionist interpretations of, e.g. autonomy, are prudentially valuable because they are constitutive of our being the sort of entities we are: *persons*. It is our being persons, and exercising the capacities constitutive of personhood which allows us to *value* things, e.g. achievement, knowledge, pleasure, etc., and make their realization part of our good *qua* person. Further, I maintain that the realization of our values is prudentially valuable of us regardless of its hedonic payoff.<sup>394</sup> That being said, many individuals do in fact both get pleasure out of realizing their values and many (if not most) individuals value experiencing pleasure so that their doing so, and realizing this value, is good for them.

### 3.2.1 *The Nature of Pleasure*

There are two dominant understandings of pleasure that hedonist theories appeal to: the sensation and attitudinal models. The sensation model maintains that pleasure is a distinctive conscious experience or an element within such an experience. That is, there is something distinctive in pleasure's intrinsic character, a certain "feeling" or phenomenology of "what it is like" to have such experiences, i.e. of what it is like to experience pleasure. It is the presence of this ineffable "something" which distinguishes pleasure from other mental states. Those forms of hedonism that espouse this account of pleasure face a challenge in the "none such" objection. This objection holds that because pleasures (or, more specifically, all of

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<sup>392</sup> Or have some similar utility value.

<sup>393</sup> I.e. intrinsic prudential value.

<sup>394</sup> After all, some individuals simply do not value pleasure (or value it that much).

those sensations or mental states which one might consider to be token instances of pleasure) are so phenomenologically diverse, there is no experientially distinctive element that is common to all instances of it. More concretely, this objection maintains that there is no common element in, for example, romantic love, enjoying delicious good, experiencing sexual pleasure, etc.<sup>395</sup> If this is true, i.e. that there is no common element which a sensation-model theorist can point to which is present in all instances of pleasure, then those forms of hedonism that are based on the sensation model of pleasure do not state a concrete thesis and are not be viable theories of well-being.

The attitudinal model of pleasure maintains that an experience is a token instance of pleasure if it is a feeling or a conscious experience, or an element in such an experience, that its subject has a relevant pro-attitude toward, e.g. a liking, preference, etc. Pleasure understood thusly is *propositional* in that one takes pleasure in the fact that some state of affairs is the case. This model of pleasure has several theoretical advantages over the preceding account. For example, because an attitudinal understanding of pleasure does not claim that there is some *unique* experiential element present in all instances of pleasure, it can explain and accommodate pleasure's putative experiential diversity. Accordingly, versions of hedonism that espouse this model of pleasure can avoid the "none such" objection. That being said, they are vulnerable to the "kill-joy" objection. This objection holds that attitudinal accounts of pleasure go wrong because individuals can take the pro-attitude which (attitudinal accounts maintain) is constitutive of pleasure toward conscious states (or states of affairs) that are not fun, delightful, joyful, pleasurable,

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<sup>395</sup> These are, as one might imagine, putative examples of paradigmatic instances of pleasure.



etc., thereby making them instances of pleasure.<sup>396</sup> Allowing that such experiences or states of affairs are instances of *pleasure* is, as one might imagine, a rather counter-intuitive<sup>397</sup> consequence for an account of pleasure. That is, if the physical/emotional/etc. masochist can have the pro-attitude constitutive of pleasure toward his abuse and thereby make it a token instance of pleasure, then the attitudinal hedonist appears to be losing his grip on our (intuitive) understanding of the nature of pleasure. Several attitudinal hedonists, e.g. Feldman, have explored various ways to deal with this objection. I am skeptical of their success and think that their “solutions” create more problems than they solve.

### 3.2.2 Hedonism's Historical Roots

Historically there have been two rival approaches taken by hedonists in explaining pleasure's intrinsic prudential value. First is the “quantitative” approach. The quantitative approach maintains that pleasure's contribution to an individual's well-being varies solely with its quantitative features, i.e. its duration and intensity. The classic example of this is Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism that held that pleasure and pain can be measured along six dimensions: intensity (i.e. strength), duration, certainty, proximity, fecundity, and purity. Accordingly, an individual's level of well-being is purely a function of the amount of pleasure in that individual's life. Bentham endorsed a sensation model of pleasure and pain according to which what makes pleasure and pain unique is how they *feel*.

Many responded to Bentham's hedonism by charging that its sole focus on the quantity of pleasurable sensations and feelings in a life made it a theory of well-being that was only “fit for a swine.” Mill, for example, was sensitive to this objection and offered a form of hedonism that, in addition to distinguishing pleasures based on their

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<sup>396</sup> Even more counter-intuitively, one can take the relevant pro-attitude towards experiences that are paradigmatic instances of displeasure or pain.

<sup>397</sup> If not a *reductio ad absurdum*.

quantitative features, also distinguished pleasures based on their *qualitative* features. That is, he maintained that besides differing in intensity and duration, pleasures also differed *in kind*. More specifically Mill argued that unlike “brute” animals who can only experience pleasures which vary in duration and intensity, human beings, who are characterized by their higher faculties, e.g. self-consciousness, practical deliberation, etc., experience pleasures which engage these higher faculties to be different in quality, i.e. “higher” and *different in kind*, than those pleasure which have their basis in our (lower) “animal” nature.

Mill maintained that the following “test” could be used to distinguish between “higher” and “lower” pleasures:

Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in *quality* so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account.<sup>398</sup>

According to Mill then, higher pleasures are those pleasures that are preferred by “competent judges.” It is important to note that this is not an account of what it is that makes higher pleasures “higher” (i.e. different in kind from other pleasures), but a way to tell which pleasures are higher pleasures. What makes higher pleasures different in kind from lower pleasures is that they both appeal to and engage human beings’ higher capacities.

By distinguishing pleasures according to their *qualitative* features, Mill was committed to its being the case that some pleasure are, by their very nature, more prudentially valuable than others regardless of their duration and/or intensity (i.e. the

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<sup>398</sup> Mill, J. S. (2010). Utilitarianism. Kessinger Publishing, p. 19. My italics.

quantitative features). This might be manifest, for instance, in its being the case that the pleasure that one gets from reading Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is of more intrinsic prudential value than the pleasure that one gets from, say, doing recreational drugs, *even if the pleasure that these experiences produce is quantitatively the same*.<sup>399</sup> Otherwise put, higher pleasures have lexical priority over lower ones. That being said, while Mill's distinction between higher and lower may allow him to capture the intuition that some pleasures (e.g. poetry) are intrinsically "better" (i.e. more prudentially valuable) than others (e.g. pushpin), regardless of the intensity and duration of the pleasure they produce, and thereby have a response to the objection that hedonism is the "philosophy of the swine," it calls into question whether making this distinction disqualifies him as a hedonist.

In fact, there is good reason to think that Mill's distinction between higher and lower pleasures introduces non-hedonic elements into his theory. This can be seen by considering some of the ways in which Mill discusses pleasure. More specifically, there are two ways in which Mill uses the term "pleasure." Sometimes he uses it to refer to a certain kind of mental state or sensation. Other times he uses it to refer to non-mental states such as actions, activities, and pursuits that either can or do cause pleasurable mental states. Consider the first set of pleasures *subjective* pleasures and the latter *objective* pleasures. There is evidence that Mill thought that higher pleasures are objective pleasures. Consider, for instance, that in the second part of his proof for the principle of utility Mill asserts that things like "virtue" and "music," which it seems appropriate to consider as being actions, activities, or pursuits, are *higher* pleasures; i.e. objective pleasures, i.e. not mere mental states.<sup>400</sup> Relatedly, when Mill introduces the concept of higher pleasures, he offers as paradigmatic examples of

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<sup>399</sup> Or even if the pleasure produced by the drugs is more intense.

<sup>400</sup> Mill, 2010: p. 86.

them “intellectual pursuits and activities” and claims that these pleasures are *intrinsically* more valuable than lower pleasures; i.e. different in kind and superior.

There are several other ways in which Mill’s doctrine of higher pleasure introduces non-hedonic elements into his theory. First, in claiming that higher pleasures have prudential value that is out of proportion to the amount of pleasure they produce,<sup>401</sup> Mill is in direct conflict with the hedonist claim that an activity, experience, etc., is prudentially valuable in proportion to the quantity of pleasure associated with it. Second, and relatedly, by claiming that those activities that constitute higher pleasures are intrinsically more prudentially valuable, regardless of the quantity of pleasure they produce, than those activities associated with lower pleasures and pursuits,<sup>402</sup> Mill is violating the hedonist commitment that the mental state of pleasure is the one and only intrinsic good and that activities can have only *extrinsic* value<sup>403</sup> so that no activity can be intrinsically more valuable than another.

Finally, Mill’s incorporation of non-hedonic elements into his theory can also be seen in his appealing to “competent judges” as reliable indicators of which things are higher pleasures. Mill maintained that competent judges prefer “modes of existence,” which in this case are those activities that are higher goods, which employ their higher faculties even if they produce less pleasure. The reason that they prefer such activities is because they appeal to their sense of *dignity*.<sup>404</sup> In light of this, competent judges’ preferences “reflect judgments about the value that these activities have independently of their being the object of desire or the source of pleasure” such that we take pleasure in these activities because they are valuable; they are not

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<sup>401</sup> Along with the related claim that they are more prudentially valuable than lower pleasures that cause more brute pleasurable feelings.

<sup>402</sup> Again, think poetry vs. pushpin.

<sup>403</sup> I.e. they are only valuable insofar as they cause pleasurable mental states in us.

<sup>404</sup> Which they have in virtue of their possessing “higher capacities.”

valuable because they are pleasurable.<sup>405</sup> Ultimately then, by maintaining that those activities which exercise our higher capacities are more prudentially valuable regardless of how *much* pleasure they produce than those lower pleasures which may in fact actually produce more pleasure, Mill introduces non-hedonic elements into his theory of prudential value.

Before moving onto contemporary versions of hedonism, it is worth noting that when considered in the abstract there is an interesting way in which well-being as self-realization<sup>406</sup> is similar to Mill's theory of prudential value. In maintaining that judgments about our well-being can be made both against the standard set by our nature *qua* human and *qua* person, I, like Mill, recognize that our well-being can be contributed to by sources which (or in ways in which) differ in kind. That is, some activities, goods, etc. further an individual's self-realization thereby contributing to his well-being *qua* person, while others contribute to his flourishing *qua* human. That being said, because a theory of well-being's having normative adequacy depends more upon its capturing the subjective intuition than its being able to capture *all* of our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation, a theory of prudential value ought to make judgments about our well-being against the standard set by our nature *qua* person. Accordingly, while Mill divides pleasures into those that are "lower" and those that are "higher," and gives lexical priority to the latter, I maintain that one can consider our well-being *qua* human and *qua* person and believe that the latter provides a far more viable standard for intuitively compelling judgments about our well-being than the former. Relatedly, just as Mill held that higher pleasures, which have their source in our higher capacities, are different in kind, and more important to our well-being than lower pleasures, I argue that our nature *qua* person, in particular

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<sup>405</sup> Mill, 2010: p. 25-26.

<sup>406</sup> Along with my stipulation that one can consider an individual's well-being both *qua* person and *qua* human.

our capacity for autonomous action and valuation,<sup>407</sup> plays a far more important role in judgments and determinations about our well-being than our nature *qua* human. I justify the priority I place on our volitional capacities on the grounds that those attributes we have *qua* person, i.e. our values, play a more active role in, and are more central to our identity, for purposes of responsibility, attributability, and our well-being, than those characteristics we have *qua* member of the human species.

Having seen Hedonism's general characteristics, historical roots, and theoretical challenges, I now turn to Roger Crisp's sensation model of hedonism and Fred Feldman's intrinsic attitudinal hedonism. As I will demonstrate, while both theories are able to avoid some of the traditional problems which plague hedonist theories of well-being, ultimately they offer alienating conceptions of our well-being and fail to appreciate the centrality of the capacities constitutive of personhood to our well-being. Further, in virtue of their sole focus on pleasure, regardless of how it is understood, hedonist theories are unable to capture our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation.

### 3.3 Crisp's Sensation Model of Hedonism

In *Reasons and the Good*<sup>408</sup> Roger Crisp offers a hedonist theory of well-being that endorses a sensation model of pleasure. Crisp's articulation and defense of his theory begins by his noting that in contemporary theorizing about well-being, hedonist theories have fallen out of favor. He cites three reasons that he believes might be behind this. First, there is reason to question Mill's success at addressing the

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<sup>407</sup> Both of which are capacities that are constitutive of personhood.

<sup>408</sup> Crisp, R. (2008). *Reasons and the Good*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

objection that hedonism is the “philosophy of the swine” by making a distinction between “higher” and “lower” pleasures. As I have shown, this distinction either fails outright or it ends up incorporating non-hedonist elements into Mill’s theory thereby disqualifying it as a form of hedonism.<sup>409</sup> Second, many have taken Moore’s arguments against hedonism in *Principia Ethica* to be damning to hedonism’s plausibility as a theory of well-being.<sup>410</sup> Finally, Nozick’s “experience machine” thought experiment has been taken to pose a serious challenge to hedonism’s ability to capture some of our central intuitions about well-being, e.g. the thought that “autonomy,” “authenticity,” or certain “perfectionist” values (e.g. achievement) are prudentially valuable aside from any tendency they might have to produce pleasurable sensations in us.

As Crisp notes, ever since Moore expressed his belief that *Principia Ethica* was full of “mistakes and confusions,”<sup>411</sup> many have doubted the force of his criticisms of hedonism. Accordingly, Crisp focuses the majority of his attention on the objection that hedonism is the “philosophy of the swine” and the objections stemming from Nozick’s experience machine thought experiment. While Crisp’s responses to these objections and his own hedonist theory of prudential value are innovative, they fail to either adequately respond to the preceding objections or capture some of our central intuitions about well-being. In particular Crisp’s hedonism cannot capture the subjective intuition,<sup>412</sup> explain the role that individuals’ evaluative perspectives and idiosyncratic makeups play in determining what is good

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<sup>409</sup> One might think, for example, that it amounts to a form of well-being Perfectionism.

<sup>410</sup> These arguments appear in chapter three of Moore’s *Principia Ethica*.

<sup>411</sup> Moore, G. E. (2004): See preface.

<sup>412</sup> This is because it is committed to its being the case that if an individual prefers, say, for prudential reasons (e.g. reasons relating to some value(s) that agent has), a good which has a lower hedonic payoff than something else, then he ought to disregard one’s own priorities and values in determining what is best for him. This, however, violates the sort of well-being subjectivism and emphasis on individual authority that underlies much of hedonism’s appeal. That is, hedonism prescribes that one ought to disregard one’s own priorities and values in pursuit of “the good (i.e. pleasurable/enjoyable) life.”

for them, or explain our intuitions about flourishing, deprivation, autonomy and/or personhood's importance to our well-being. Ultimately then, even though Crisp's hedonism is one of the stronger and more theoretically viable and nuanced formulations of the sensation model of hedonism, it fails to capture what I have offered as some of the central theoretical desiderata for a theory of well-being.

### 3.3.1 Crisp and the "None Such" Objection

While Crisp's hedonism espouses a "sensation" model of pleasure, he parts ways with traditional sensation model approaches by holding that it is not pleasure, but *enjoyment* that contributes to an individual's well-being.<sup>413</sup> In light of this distinction, Crisp maintains that "what is good for any individual are the enjoyable experiences in her life, what is bad is the suffering in that life, and the life best for an individual is that with the greatest balance of enjoyment over suffering."<sup>414</sup> Hedonism conceived of thusly is committed to its being the case that an individual's well-being is entirely dependent upon the character of an individual's mental states.<sup>415</sup> Accordingly, Crisp endorses an understanding of pleasure according to which what all enjoyable experiences have in common is their positive feeling tone: an intrinsic, unanalyzable, quality of pleasantness (enjoyableness) which is present to a greater or lesser degree in all pleasant experiences. In light of this, Crisp's enjoyment centered hedonism must, like other sensation models of hedonism, respond to the "none such" objection.

Again, the "none such" objection to the sensation model of hedonism holds that there is no unified sort of state, event, or property which is present in all instances of sensations of pleasure, so that theories of hedonism which espouse a sensational model of pleasure either fail to state a determinate thesis or they only attribute value

<sup>413</sup> And "suffering," not "pain," which detracts from it.

<sup>414</sup> Crisp, 2008: p. 102.

<sup>415</sup> This makes Crisp's hedonism a "state-of-mind" as opposed to "state-of-the-world" theory.



to something that does not exist, thereby implying that nothing has (prudential) value. To his credit Crisp realizes that he must respond to this objection, which he describes as the charge that there is not a single “feeling tone” common to all enjoyable experiences. He does this by arguing that there actually is, in fact, some “feel” that all enjoyable experiences have in common: *they feel enjoyable*. Accordingly, there *is* something (distinctive) that it is like to be experiencing enjoyment.<sup>416</sup> In order to elucidate and capture this common element or feel, Crisp draws an analogy with our experience of different colors. Specifically, he argues that just like there is something that it is like to be having an experience of color, there is something that it is like to be experiencing *a certain color*. Analogously, just as there is something that it is like to be having an experience of enjoyment, there is something that it is like to be experiencing *a certain sort of enjoyment*.<sup>417</sup> This being the case, Crisp asserts that his enjoyment-based sensation model of hedonism can capture the heterogeneity that one finds among the myriad of enjoyments we experience.<sup>418</sup> Further, Crisp believes that his understanding of pleasure (i.e. enjoyment) allows us to rank different sensations according to how enjoyable they are for us; after all, he argues, we do it all the time.<sup>419</sup> That is, we constantly judge certain experiences as being “more enjoyable” than others despite our lacking some objective standard to compare both of them against.

Despite both Crisp’s innovative enjoyment-based sensation model of hedonism and his response to the “none such” objection, his theory cannot appreciate

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<sup>416</sup> Crisp, 2008: p 109.

<sup>417</sup> Crisp, 2008: p. 104-105.

<sup>418</sup> In light of the preceding Crisp holds that enjoyment is best understood using the “determinable-determinate” distinction. Drawing upon this distinction allows him to argue that the “none such” objection goes wrong in only considering determinates. That is, while enjoyable experiences differ from one another (i.e. they might be gratifying, welcomed by their subject, favored, etc.) they all feel good.

<sup>419</sup> Crisp, 2008: p. 110.

the fact that some of the things that putatively contribute (sometimes highly) to the quality of individuals' lives (i.e. their well-being) simply are not (in any charitably understood sense) enjoyable. Take, for example, an individual's working hard to achieve something they value, e.g. writing a good dissertation, or a parent's raising and rearing a child. Both writing a dissertation and child rearing are activities, goods, etc., that individuals' typically value and that they consider to be integral to their lives going well.<sup>420</sup> Many of the activities constitutive of these two activities are, however, simply *not enjoyable* in any reasonable sense of the word. For instance, the long tedious hours involved in proof-reading one's doctoral dissertation or a parent's feeding, cleaning, and watching their young children are examples of activities which are often not enjoyable. That being said, both the PhD student working on his dissertation and the parent raising his child clearly both value the activities they are engaged in. Accordingly, how these individual would evaluate the quality of their lives<sup>421</sup> is directly tied to their realizing their values regardless of whether they enjoy the activities constitutive of the realization of these values. In fact, some of the activities constitutive of realizing the preceding values (e.g. proofreading one's dissertation or changing a dirty diaper) are downright miserable and not enjoyable in the least. That being said, we do them, and think ourselves ultimately better off for having done them, because they realize values that are central to our identity *qua* person. To the extent that Crisp is left evaluating these individual's as having a low level of well-being purely in virtue of their lives lacking the sensation of enjoyment, he offers a theory of prudential value which is unable to capture the subjective intuition. Leaving these issues aside for the moment (they are explored more in what

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<sup>420</sup> I.e. individuals typically want to achieve things that they value and parents want to do a good job raising their children for its own sake.

<sup>421</sup> I.e. their level of well-being.

follows) I want to consider the classic objections typically made to sensation models of hedonism as they apply to Crisp.

### 3.3.2 *Oysters Before Swine: The Problem of “Lower” Pleasures*

As I have noted, one of the more popular objections to versions of hedonism which, like Crisp’s, are based on the sensation model of pleasure is that they are a theory of the good life “which is fit only for a swine.” Abstractly, this is the charge that they cannot make meaningful and intuitive distinctions about the prudential value of different sorts or sources of pleasure. More concretely, this objection holds that Crisp’s type of hedonism (i.e. versions of hedonism based on the sensation model of pleasure) is committed to the counterintuitive implication that the pleasure that an individual gets from, say, writing poetry, contributes to that individual’s well-being as much as playing pushpin does if they produce *quantitatively* identical amounts of pleasure. Many well-being theorists reject this verdict on the grounds that these two pleasures are on different *qualitative* levels; i.e. the pleasure they produce is different in kind. Crisp’s way of illustrating this intuition involves his offering the case of “Haydn and the Oyster”:

An individual in heaven who is about to be reincarnated is given the choice between either living the life of the famous composer Haydn, a life which involves composing some wonderful music, influencing the evolution of the symphony, meeting with success and honor in one’s own lifetime, is cheerful and filled with friends, involves travel and gaining much enjoyment from field sports, and which would last for seventy-seven years; or one could have the life of an oyster, which would involve mild pleasures, yet which would last as long as one would like.<sup>422</sup>

As Crisp points out, if all that matters for one’s well-being are pleasurable/enjoyable experiences, then after a certain (long enough) amount of time one ought to rationally prefer the oyster’s life to Haydn’s because such a life would, purely in virtue of its

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<sup>422</sup> Crisp, 2008: p. 112.

brute length, contain more enjoyable experiences. Intuitively, however, none of us would choose living the (admittedly *long*) life of the oyster over Haydn's.

Crisp asserts that his enjoyment-based sensation model of hedonism is able to argue that Haydn's life is (prudentially) better than the (long) life of the oyster because of its enjoyableness. That is, any person would (almost assuredly) experience Haydn's life as being more enjoyable than the oyster's life regardless of how long the latter is. Accordingly, just because the oyster's life might contain more pleasure solely in virtue of its length, this does not necessarily mean that such a life is more enjoyable for the individual whose life it is. Despite his rejecting the idea that the brute *amount* of pleasure in a life determines that life's level of well-being, Crisp is careful to insist that his view is still hedonic because fundamentally it is still enjoyableness that matters to well-being. Accordingly something like "nobility," which Haydn's life has and the oyster's does not, does not "make an experience better for its subject. But if enjoyed it may justify a preference for one kind of experience over another, of whatever duration."<sup>423</sup>

Keeping in mind Crisp's evaluation of the case of Haydn and the Oyster, imagine another scenario in which one is given the opportunity to be injected with a drug that will make one enjoy to a very high degree rolling around in the mud and eating slop all day long; i.e. literally living (and loving (i.e. enjoying)) the life of a swine. Now, if all that matters for an individual's well-being is that individual's having enjoyable experiences, then according to Crisp's theory it would be in one's prudential interest<sup>424</sup> to take the drug. This is the case even if one would not, right now, enjoy the activities involved in the life of a swine. After all, as a result of taking the drug one would enjoy one's life as a swine indeed! If Crisp's response to the case

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<sup>423</sup> Crisp, 2008: p. 116

<sup>424</sup> I.e. would be best for one's well-being

of Haydn and the Oyster is any indication,<sup>425</sup> then the way in which Crisp would respond to this case is by holding that: if the effect of changing one's desires is a change in one's judgments (so that one judges one's living the life of a swine as being more enjoyable than one's current normal life), then one is not in a position to properly judge one's level of enjoyment. That is, one's evaluation is somehow "biased" and ought to be discounted. This move, however, appears to commit Crisp to maintaining either that there is some sort of "standard" or "objective" position from which judgments about the enjoyableness of one's experiences are (prudentially) authoritative<sup>426</sup> or that there is some objective amount of enjoyment that it is "appropriate" to get from, say, rolling around in the mud. Where, however, would one (specifically, Crisp) find such a "standard" or how would one derive it? Indexing a particular individual's idiosyncratic makeup along with his judgments/evaluations of enjoyableness to some particular time seems arbitrary; after all, our idiosyncratic makeups, judgments, and evaluations of enjoyableness can and do change. Further, in some situations it appears as if we would want our desires to change from what they currently are. Imagine, for instance, that I recognize that I would be healthier and live a lot longer (and ultimately have more enjoyment in my life as a whole) if I no longer enjoyed smoking and were to quit. I recognize, however, that I do not have much will-power and cannot change my desires. If someone were to offer to hypnotize me so that I no longer desired to smoke, found it enjoyable, or judged it as such, I would gladly accept his offer. In this sort of case, should we follow Crisp and maintain that because the effect of a change in my desires is a change in my judgment I am no

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<sup>425</sup> That is, imagining a similar case with Haydn and the oyster Crisp maintains that "if the effect of altering my present desires, and the desires of the oyster, is to affect my judgment, then all that the angel has done is to create a scenario in which I am not in a position to properly judge my levels of enjoyment," Crisp, 2008: p. 117.

<sup>426</sup> This would essentially make Crisp out to be a sort of idealized desire-satisfaction theorist or something similar to it and would inherit such approaches' problems.

longer in a position to properly judge my level of enjoyment? This appears to be Crisp's diagnosis of this case. In contrast, I maintain that one ought to recognize that I prompted this change in myself as the result of what I value. That is, I value a long healthy life over the pleasure of smoking. In light of these considerations well-being as self-realization has a ready diagnosis of this case. That is, one's judgments of value can play an important role in defining what one values and an individual's well-being consists in these values' realization. Accordingly, the preceding case involves hypnosis being used as a tool (i.e. it is instrumental) in one's self-realization, not a bias in one's judgments about enjoyableness. Maintaining that it is the result of such biases discounts the centrality of an individual's evaluative makeup and perspective in judgments concerning what is good for that individual. This, of course, courts worries about alienation.

Perhaps, however, Crisp wants to offer some "idealizing" conditions upon our evaluations of "enjoyableness" so that only those judgments of enjoyableness which are, for instance, properly "rational," "informed," "*non-biased*," etc. would be the sort which contribute to our well-being. This, however, would incorporate non-hedonic elements into Crisp's theory in that one's *actual* experiences of enjoyableness would no longer be the final arbiter of how enjoyable some experience is for him. Relatedly, it would make it the case that Crisp is offering a sort of "idealized" desire-satisfaction theory of well-being<sup>427</sup> and would, accordingly, inherit the problems facing such accounts.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> The subject of the next chapter.

<sup>428</sup> Finally, perhaps Crisp intends to maintain that there is some sort of "objective" level of enjoyment that one ought to find in the life of the oyster and another in Haydn's life and that it is this standard which makes Haydn's life involve more enjoyment than that oyster's. This however, conflicts with Crisp's claim that individuals are the final arbiters in judging how enjoyable some particular experience is. It also makes Crisp's theory look less hedonistic and more like an objective list theory of well-being. Otherwise put, the more that Crisp seeks to "correct" or "idealize" our judgments of experiences' enjoyableness the more he introduces non-hedonic considerations into both his enumerative and explanatory accounts of well-being. The enumerative account because he will rule out

Hopefully one can see how the case of Haydn and the Oyster is a variant on the “philosophy of the swine” objection against sensation models of hedonism. That is, it involves two sources of pleasure, one that is intuitively more prudentially valuable (Haydn’s life) despite containing quantitatively less pleasure than the other (the *very* long and pleasant life of the oyster). Again, Mill’s response to this objection involved his distinguishing between higher and lower pleasures and holding that no amount of lower pleasures can outweigh higher ones. This incommensurability has its roots in the qualitative difference, i.e. a difference of kind, between two types of pleasure. While this move has some superficial appeal, it faces a dilemma. Either higher pleasures are “higher” because they are more pleasurable/enjoyable, in which case no special distinction can be made between higher and lower pleasures on the basis of anything except intensity and duration.<sup>429</sup> Or higher pleasures are higher for some other reasons, e.g. their being “noble,” or their appealing to competent judges’ “dignity,” in which case Mill appears to have abandoned hedonism by allowing non-hedonic values into his formal theory of prudential value.<sup>430</sup>

Not wanting to risk falling upon either horn of the preceding dilemma, Crisp avoids arguing that there are two qualitatively distinct types of pleasure. He also rejects the idea that there is some sort of *objective* scale which one could use to measure different experiences’ “enjoyableness.” Again, Crisp argues that in most cases the “final arbiter of how enjoyable some experience is, and how it compares to

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some judgments of enjoyment because they are biased, and the explanatory account because part of the explanation for what puts one in a “proper position” to judge one’s level of enjoyment will make reference to non-hedonic considerations which either rule in or rule out certain judgments of enjoyment.

<sup>429</sup> In this case the oyster’s life is better (i.e. more prudentially valuable) than Haydn’s purely in virtue of its duration.

<sup>430</sup> That is, if Mill ought to be understood as maintaining that higher pleasures are higher because of some intrinsic quality that they have, and this quality is not purely hedonic, then he would allow non-hedonic elements into his theory of well-being and disqualify his theory as a form of hedonism.

some other, is the subject herself.”<sup>431</sup> That is, an individual’s judgment(s) and/or evaluative perspective determines an experience’s level of “enjoyment.” Crisp maintains, however, that such evaluations are not necessarily correct; i.e. some sorts of biases<sup>432</sup> can skew one’s evaluation of enjoyableness. In such cases one’s evaluations are *defeated* and ought not be considered the final arbiter in determining what is prudentially value for one. Appealing to “biases” in order to distinguish those instances in which an individual’s experience/evaluation of something as pleasurable is prudentially authoritative and those in which it is not is, however, not without its difficulties. While I have already considered some of these difficulties as they were manifest in the case of Haydn and the Oyster, they can also be seen when one considers another serious objection to sensation models of hedonism: the objection based on intense pleasure.

The intuition driving the objection based on intense pleasure(s) can be seen by imagining an individual who is terrified and repulsed by the idea of experiencing pleasure so intense that it compromises his rational and volitional capacities, e.g. he is a sort of self-denying stoic. Now, if this individual were to experience intense enjoyment<sup>433</sup> that is brought on by either the use of powerful opiates or the direct electrical stimulation of his brain, then it appears that Crisp’s sensation model of hedonism is committed to his being quite well-off; after all his life is filled with enjoyable experiences. This is despite the fact that for this particular person the thought of experiencing such pleasure is terrifying; i.e. he neither wants to have this sort of experience (i.e. he does not value it) nor does he want to be the type of person who enjoys it (i.e. he does not want to be the type of person that values it). Insofar as one thinks that a theory of well-being ought to be sensitive to an individual’s

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<sup>431</sup> Crisp, 2008: p. 115.

<sup>432</sup> E.g. cultural biases, self-deception, false-memory.

<sup>433</sup> Or pleasure, as the case may be.



evaluative perspective and idiosyncratic makeup, in order to, say, capture the subjective intuition and avoid worries about alienation, hedonists who, like Crisp, appear committed to maintaining that the preceding individual has a high level of well-being purely in virtue his experiencing enjoyment, are unable to capture important conditions of normative adequacy for a theory of well-being.

Crisp could attempt to avoid the objection based on intense pleasure by arguing that the preceding cases involves a sort of “bias” in virtue of the enjoyment’s being brought about by the drug induced high or electrical stimulation. As such, the presumption that the individual’s experience<sup>434</sup> is what determines whether or not something is enjoyable is “defeated.”<sup>435</sup> If Crisp were to offer this response, however, then it appears that his attitudinal hedonism stops being a theory of well-being which focuses solely on the quality of an individual’s experience(s), i.e. whether they are token instances of enjoyment, and begins to resemble an *idealized*, or otherwise corrected, desire/preference satisfaction theory of well-being which rules out some experiences, e.g. those which involve certain “biases,” as not being prudentially valuable.<sup>436</sup> I am doubtful that Crisp would pursue this line of response because of the sort of theory he sees himself as offering; i.e. he is quite clear that his hedonism is a “mental-state” theory of well-being.

An important upshot of Crisp’s maintaining that certain “biases” can defeat an individual’s determination of some experience’s being “enjoyable” is that an individual’s *actual* evaluative perspective, and judgments about enjoyment, is no longer the final arbiter when it comes to whether an experience is enjoyable or not. That being said, if biases can affect the (prudential) authority of an individual’s evaluative perspective or his judgments concerning enjoyment, and it is this

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<sup>434</sup> Including that individual’s judgments or evaluative perspective concerning such enjoyment.

<sup>435</sup> I.e. the bias/manipulation serves as a defeater.

<sup>436</sup> Say, because they are not truly “enjoyable.”

experience/judgment that determines whether something is in fact enjoyable,<sup>437</sup> then Crisp's hedonism faces a dilemma. On the one hand, if Crisp maintains that an individual is in fact the final arbiter of whether some experience or other is "enjoyable," and therefore prudentially valuable, then to the extent that Crisp "idealizes" or "corrects" those judgments, he discounts the prudential relevance of an individual's *actual* experiences/perspective/evaluative makeup and thereby fails to capture the subjective intuition<sup>438</sup> as it applies to his theory. On the other hand, if Crisp stipulates that an individual's evaluations or judgments of enjoyableness can be "biased," such that they do not determine how enjoyable some experience is, which might be Crisp's response to the drug/electrical-stimulation case, then it appears as if Crisp's sensation model of hedonism stops being a mental state theory of well-being<sup>439</sup> and introduces non-hedonic elements into his theory. This would violate the very spirit (i.e. sensitivity to an individual's actual experiences) that motivated Crisp toward the attitudinal model of hedonism in the first place.

In contrast to the many problems facing Crisp's response to the case of Haydn and the Oyster, well-being as self-realization has a ready response to the case. That is, whether or not one ought to opt for Haydn's life or the (long) life of the oyster depends upon what one values. Now, while I am not about to make some broad claim about what *every person* values or must value in virtue of their being a person, I think it is safe to maintain that most, if not all persons, value things besides the very simple pleasures that would be present in the (admittedly long) life of the oyster. Insofar as this is the case Haydn's life is more prudentially valuable than the oyster's because it contains more of the realization of what persons typically value.

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<sup>437</sup> And, therefore, prudentially valuable.

<sup>438</sup> Thereby raising worries about alienation.

<sup>439</sup> By making reference to states outside of an individual's experience of pleasure/enjoyment, namely, the source of the "bias."

### 3.3.3 Hedonism and the Experience Machine

In *Philosophical Explanations*<sup>440</sup> Robert Nozick attempts to undermine the viability of hedonist theories of well-being by offering a case which involves what he calls an “experience machine:” a machine which one could plug into in order to perpetually experience all the pleasurable/enjoyable sensations that one could imagine. He argues that if hedonism is correct in maintaining that experiencing as much pleasure/enjoyment as one can is the only thing that matters for one’s well-being<sup>441</sup> and that if one plugs into the experience machine then one will experience more pleasure/enjoyment than if one did not, then one ought to plug in; there is no reason not to. Otherwise put, it is in one’s prudential self-interest to plug in. Nozick does not, however believe that one should plug in, an intuition which, he believes, many do/should share. He argues that plugging into the experience machine would not contribute to one’s well-being because “we want to do certain things...we want to be a certain way [and] plugging into an experience machine limits us to a man-made reality.”<sup>442</sup> That is, Nozick maintains that people do not want to merely think that they are having certain experiences or accomplishing certain goals; we want to *actually* do those things and we think that our well-being is only enhanced to the extent that we actually do them. Otherwise put, we want to be a certain type of person, not merely a being plugged into a machine. Nozick takes the upshot of our reaction(s) to this thought experiment<sup>443</sup> to show that various things matter to us (for purposes of our well-being) in addition to the quality of our experiences: (1) we want to do certain things (and not merely think we are doing them); (2) we want to be a certain kind of person (and not merely think that we are a certain type of person); (3) we want to be

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<sup>440</sup> Nozick, R. (1983). *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press.

<sup>441</sup> I.e. that the sensation of pleasure is the only thing which is intrinsically prudentially valuable.

<sup>442</sup> Nozick, 1983: p. 43

<sup>443</sup> I.e. that we would not want to enter it or put our loved ones in it.

able to make contact with a reality deeper than one that is entirely man-made (unlike the one provided by the experience machine). One might call the preceding the values of: accomplishment, personhood, and authentic understanding. I believe that these are all important values which hold a central place within a theory of well-being and that Crisp's theory is neither able to capture them nor explain them away.

Crisp's response to Nozick's experience machine objection begins by his considering a case which addresses 1-3: he imagines two people, P and Q, who both "write a great novel, [are] courageous, kind, intelligent, witty, and loving, and make significant discoveries" and enjoy all these aspects of their lives.<sup>444</sup> The only difference between these individuals is that while P has a normal life, Q is hooked up to an experience machine run by super neurologists. As Crisp notes, according to his enjoyment-based hedonism P and Q have exactly the same level of well-being. Many, however, would recoil from this conclusion. The source of this aversion has its roots in the value that we ascribe to achievement, personhood, authentic understanding, and autonomy. In light of this, Crisp attempts to explain these sorts of non-hedonic value away.

Crisp's attempt to explain away achievement's putative non-hedonic value begins by his noting that achievement involves many experiences that are often enjoyed in their own right. While he acknowledges that this is not a knockdown argument against all of those goods that are putatively non-hedonic, he believes that it points toward the fact that individuals often enjoy the goods cited by non-hedonists. That being said, he maintains that it is the *enjoyment* that these goods produce, and not some other non-hedonic element they contain, which lies behind their prudential value. Relatedly, Crisp believes that hedonist theories of well-being ought to co-opt

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<sup>444</sup> Crisp 2008: p. 122.

what many call “the paradox of hedonism,” the view that one’s *thinking* that some good, e.g. achievement, has intrinsic (i.e. non-hedonic) value can be justified on hedonist grounds if the result of adopting such non-hedonic principles will actually maximize well-being (understood as enjoyment). That is, one’s life will have more enjoyment in it<sup>445</sup> if one does *not* think like a hedonist. In light of this, Crisp argues that “if we allow that in that usual case someone will enjoy accomplishing more than accomplishing less, then there are good reasons to think that motivation by non-hedonist principles may be more successful, by hedonist lights, than motivation by hedonist beliefs.”<sup>446</sup> Further, he believes that there is a genealogical story that could be told about how human beings may have developed dispositions and understandings of the nature of the good that, though putatively non-hedonistic, are in fact securely based on those goods’ capacity for the promotion of enjoyment. He believes that this explains the internal evaluative view typically taken toward accomplishment; i.e. why creatures like us have rationally developed non-hedonistic dispositions and beliefs.

Ultimately then, Crisp seeks support for his hedonist theory of prudential value in (what he believes to be) the fact that we are goal-seeking beings who typically enjoy the process of achieving and completing our goals. Relatedly, he asserts that an individual’s believing that his goals are independently valuable increases his enjoyment. This, he believes, explains why we (mistakenly) believe that achievement has independent (i.e. non-hedonic) prudential value. Crisp also believes that a genealogical account can further explain non-hedonic goods’ putative prudential value. Again, consider “achievement.” Crisp maintains that the value that we attach to achievement<sup>447</sup> often comes from the attitudes of others whose approval or good graces we seek, e.g. our parents, which in turn influences what we derive

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<sup>445</sup> And, consequently, a higher level of well-being.

<sup>446</sup> Crisp, 2008: p. 120.

<sup>447</sup> Or other putatively non-hedonic goods.

enjoyment from. Relatedly, he also postulates that the reason that we derive enjoyment from things like achievement, authenticity, etc. is because they have a clear hedonic payoff: they boost one's social standing, fend off deception, and assist with our understanding of the world, all of which have a clear evolutionary advantage<sup>448</sup> (i.e. a hedonic pay off). Accordingly, Crisp believes that the sensation model of hedonism can explain away the putative non-hedonic value of many of the goods appealed to in Nozick's experience machine thought experiment.

I do not find the preceding arguments persuasive because the burden of proof is upon Crisp to demonstrate that the reason that many putatively non-hedonic goods are actually prudentially valuable is because of their (unapparent) hedonic payoff. That is, there are many non-hedonic prudential goods, e.g. knowledge achieved at a high hedonic price (i.e. painfully pursued), one's being treated justly, difficult aesthetic achievement, which putatively do not have any hedonic payoff and which one would be stretching credulity to give an account of how they do have such a payoff. In contrast, to the extent that one thinks that the preceding goods can or do have prudential value, well-being as self-realization can explain how and why this is the case. That is, one can value the esoteric knowledge under consideration or value realizing justice in one's own life and in one's interactions with others so that these values being realized contributes to one's well-being. What's more, the mere fact that Crisp can tell a genealogical story about how an internal evaluative perspective toward putatively non-hedonic goods might come about does not mean that this is actually the case nor does it entirely debunk claims of achievement's non-hedonic value. Instead, the burden of proof is on Crisp to explain why many paradigmatic non-hedonic goods actually have value because of their unapparent hedonic

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<sup>448</sup> Crisp, 2008: p. 122.

consequences. In light of this, Crisp's attempt to reduce the goods that Nozick's extrapolates from our reactions to the Experience Machine thought experiment fail.

### *3.3.4 Prudential Value Without Enjoyment or Agency?*

Another way in which Crisp challenges the prudential value of putative non-hedonic goods like achievement is by proposing that one imagine an individual who has such goods in his life but does not enjoy them and then consider whether one is still inclined to say that these goods are, in fact, prudentially valuable. Accordingly, he imagines two individuals, R and P, whose lives are exactly the same except that R's life has all of the enjoyment and suffering stripped out of it. As he describes her, "R writes a great novel, but finds no enjoyment in what she is doing or what she achieves. She is not especially gloomy or depressed, and is motivated by the thought that accomplishment will advance her own well-being and that she has a moral duty to use her talents."<sup>449</sup> While Crisp concedes that one might think that R's accomplishments are admirable, or that they make for a good human life,<sup>450</sup> he insists that if she does not find her achievements, or the work she put toward them, to be enjoyable, then it is doubtful that they contribute to her well-being. While Crisp thinks that this sort of case lends support to his supposition that only those things which one enjoys can contribute to one's well-being, I believe that there is good reason to disagree with him. Imagine, for example, another individual S, who on her deathbed, contemplates her many achievements and realizes that even though she did not enjoy these accomplishments,<sup>451</sup> she might judge that at least they gave her life some meaning and purpose, say, because they realized values which were central to her identity and life. That is, she might think that realizing these values made her life

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<sup>449</sup> Crisp, 2008: p. 122.

<sup>450</sup> That is, one might think that these achievements have perfectionist value.

<sup>451</sup> Perhaps, for instance, she did not enjoy these activities because she was too wrapped up in the complexities involved in them or that before she could take some time to reflect upon and enjoy what she was doing she simply moved onto a new activities which wholly absorbed her.

better (for her) regardless of whether they were accompanied by enjoyment. Otherwise put, she might, for example, take comfort but not enjoyment in the fact that *she accomplished something*, or, in my preferred parlance, realized values that are important to her, and think that her life is more prudentially valuable for it. Insofar as one thinks that S's case, and her judgments about how well her life went *for her*, play an important role in determining her life's level of well-being, Crisp's sensation model of hedonism cannot capture the subjective intuition.

A large part of what one ought to take away from the preceding discussion is that Crisp's sensation model of hedonism, or any sensation model of hedonism for that matter, is wrong to either ignore or downplay agency, autonomy, or personhood's role and importance to our well-being. The exercise of these capacities, i.e. the capacities constitutive of personhood, allows us to make the desires, impulses, sensations (including enjoyment), etc., that occur in us either internal or external to us, and in the case of the latter, more central to our identity for purposes of, for example, attributability so that they are aspects of our identity which we value and whose realization contributes to our well-being *qua* person. By maintaining that an individual's well-being consists *solely* in that individual's experiencing enjoyment Crisp neither recognizes nor appreciates how our nature *qua* person affects the nature of our well-being. That is, our being autonomous is constitutive of our nature *qua* person and it enables us to shape and define the nature of our well-being *qua* person. While "experiencing pleasure/enjoyment" may be one of an individual's values, so that experiencing pleasure/enjoyment realizes one of that individual's values and contributes to his well-being, our activity and well-being *qua* person, i.e. our defining and shaping our values and pursuing our self-realization, cannot be reduced to its hedonic upshot; that is, it is a contribution to our well-being that differs in kind from



pleasure. Accordingly, by focusing solely on enjoyment, sensation models of hedonism consider us only as subjects of experience, not as agents/persons, thereby failing to appreciate important aspects of our well-being.

We are now in a position to step back and consider the sensation model of hedonism's theoretical failures. First, it cannot capture the subjective intuition and is likely to offer an alienating conception of an individual's good. This is because it does not recognize that there is much that individuals' value, and hence pursue, desire, etc.,<sup>452</sup> other than merely enjoyable experiences, the realization of which contributes to their well-being. Hedonists who espouse a sensation model of pleasure either need to argue that these individuals' are simply mistaken about what contributes to their well-being<sup>453</sup> or they need to be able to (successfully) give a reductive hedonic account of all putatively non-hedonic goods. The first avenue of response causes these theories to offer alienating conceptions of an individual's good while the viability of the latter is seriously in doubt. Ultimately then, to the extent that one thinks that persons value (intrinsically and for prudential reason) things besides the sensation of enjoyment, or if one doubts the viability of giving a reductive account of all putative prudential goods in terms of enjoyment, then one ought to seriously doubt the viability of hedonist accounts which rely on a sensation model of pleasure.

Finally, because Crisp holds that individuals' well-being consists in their having enjoyable experiences, thereby making reference only to the character of their mental states, he lacks the conceptual tools necessary to explain or capture any of our intuitions concerning deprivation and flourishing *qua* human or *qua* person. This can be vividly illustrated by considering the following case. Imagine that a parent had the opportunity to have their child undergo a procedure that would ensure that their child

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<sup>452</sup> I.e. are favorably oriented toward.

<sup>453</sup> Thereby dismissing the importance of their evaluative makeup and/or perspective to determination of what is prudentially valuable for them.

perpetually experienced enjoyment but that it would arrest that child's mental and physical development at three years of age. According to Crisp's hedonism a parent ought to jump at this opportunity. After all, any good parent wants what is best for their child and in the case imagined the parent would ensure that their child had a great deal of all that matters in life: enjoyment. Like many of the thought experiments we have looked at, we recoil from this idea. That is, we think that such a child would be flourishing neither cognitively nor physically and that he would be deprived of what makes life worthwhile; i.e. his well-being *qua* human would be very poor indeed. Relatedly, this individual would never get to fully develop those capacities constitutive of personhood so could neither become a person in the full sense of the term nor do well as a person by taking an active role in defining his or her values and then realizing them. Further, if we think that this child is deprived of many goods in life (knowledge, artistic achievement, deep personal relationships, etc.), without having recourse to consider the child's well-being *qua* member of the human species or *qua* person, Crisp does not have the conceptual tools necessary to explain what exactly this child is deprived of. Ultimately then, Crisp's sensation model of hedonism cannot capture the subjective intuition and related issues concerning the authority of an individual idiosyncratic and evaluative makeup and perspectives on their lives, nor can it capture personhood and autonomy's importance to well-being. Finally it lacks the conceptual apparatus necessary to capture our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation.

### **3.4 Feldman's Attitudinal Hedonism**

Turning away from Crisp's sensation model of hedonism, I want to consider Fred Feldman's "intrinsic attitudinal hedonism," which is formulated in his book

*What is This Thing Called Happiness?*<sup>454</sup> Feldman maintains that the kind of pleasure that is relevant to an individual's well-being is intrinsic attitudinal pleasure. Unlike sensation models of hedonism, which hold that there is something common to all instances of pleasure, some "feel," or their all being "enjoyable," Feldman holds that pleasure understood *attitudinally* need not have a common sensory, qualitative, affective, or other experiential character. Instead, he maintains that one experiences attitudinal pleasure when one is pleased or, more specifically, takes pleasure in its being the case *that* some state of affairs obtains, i.e. one takes pleasure in a situation "for its own sake." Accordingly, an individual's well-being is directly affected only by those episodes of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure that enter into his life.

By maintaining that attitudinal pleasure consists in an individual's taking pleasure in the fact that something is the case Feldman is not committed to all pleasures having some common phenomenological "feel" to them. This allows him to avoid the "none such objection." Feldman's attitudinal hedonism also appears to have a way to respond to the objection based on intense pleasure.<sup>455</sup> That is, Feldman can argue that while one might experience pleasure as a result of the drug or electrical stimulation, one need not take attitudinal pleasure in the fact that one is experiencing it. In fact, one might be disgusted, horrified, etc., i.e. experiencing attitudinal pain, in its being the case that one is experiencing pleasure by means of forced stimulation.

While attitudinal pleasure's propositional nature might allow Feldman to avoid the objection based on intense pleasure, i.e. it could allow him to explain the disvalue of situations in which one is manipulated in order to enjoy an experience or

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<sup>454</sup> Feldman, F. (2012). *What Is This Thing Called Happiness?* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>455</sup> As we will remember, this is the objection that an individual's who is either experiencing a strong pleasurable high which is the result of some drug or whose brain is likewise manipulated into experiencing intense enjoyment is having a great life indeed even if this individual is horrified at the thought of experiencing such pleasure.

take pleasure in it, this apparently comes at the cost of Feldman's being unable to capture the fact that individuals often experience pleasure directly and are made (prudentially) better off for it. That is, individuals often do not reflect upon and adopt the pro-attitude(s) constitutive of pleasure toward putatively pleasurable activities. Take, for instance, an individual who is having fun dancing at a club. Intuitively it seems that an individual can simply enjoy the movement of his body, the beat and rhythm of the music, etc., without his necessarily reflecting upon and taking pleasure in the fact that he is enjoying the movement of his body, the beat and rhythm of the music, etc. If, however, he did not reflect upon or take attitudinal pleasure in this experience,<sup>456</sup> then it appears as if Feldman cannot adequately capture how such experiences (i.e. those which an individual experiences *directly*)<sup>457</sup> contribute to an individual's well-being. Insofar as one thinks that persons can (prudentially) benefit from instances of unreflective and unmediated pleasure, Feldman's theory has a notable theoretical blind spot (and weakness). In contrast, well-being as self-realization has a ready explanation of the prudential value of direct or unmitigated pleasure: insofar as one values such pleasure instances of it contribute to one's self-realization and one need not reflect upon such pleasure at every moment in which it is occurring. That is, well-being as self-realization can explain why a thoughtful hedonist (i.e. one who has thought about and values having (as many) instances of pleasure in his life (as possible)) who experiences a great deal of pleasure is having a great life indeed: he is realizing one of the values that his life is structured around and which is central to his identity.

While Feldman's intrinsic attitudinal hedonism might not be threatened by the objection based on intense pleasure as it was presented against Crisp, it is threatened

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<sup>456</sup> I.e. self-consciously take pleasure in the fact that he is having that experience.

<sup>457</sup> I.e. unmitigated with a/the pro-attitude thought to be constitutive of attitudinal pleasure.

by a variant of that objection. In particular, imagine an individual who initially takes attitudinal pleasure from, say, some drug or electrical stimulation, which suddenly becomes so intense that it compromises his reflective capacities, thereby compromising his ability to reflectively take attitudinal pleasure or pain in that state of affairs. Further, imagine that while this person values experiencing a moderate amount of pleasure, he recoils at the thought of experiencing pleasure so intense that it compromises his rational or volitional capacities. As such he would not take attitudinal pleasure in that state of affairs in which his capacities were compromised; unfortunately for him, however, the very intensity of the pleasure precludes his actually adopting an attitude of disfavor toward the situation that he dreaded. Feldman's intrinsic attitudinal hedonism appears committed to diagnosing the preceding individual as having a high level of well-being during his incapacitating euphoria; after all, he had the relevant pro-attitude toward it as it began. Because he does not have the opportunity to reflect upon and experience attitudinal pain, his level of well-being is not affected by a scenario in which, were his capacities intact, he would experience a great deal of attitudinal pain. Again, well-being as self-realization has a ready answer to this case: the individual does not value such pleasure, this is a fact about his idiosyncratic evaluative makeup, e.g. the structure of his will. This is the case even when an individual's reflective capacities are temporarily compromised by something like intense pleasure. This is due to well-being as self-realization's "objective" elements: there is a fact of the matter about what an individual's values are and whether that individual is realizing those values in his life. Ultimately then, insofar as Feldman's intrinsic attitudinal hedonism is committed to the preceding sort of individual doing well, his theory cannot capture the subjective intuition and offers an alienating conception of an individual's good. That is, it appears committed to an

individual's experiencing a high level of well-being in situations which are completely inimical with his values, i.e. what he is like.

One then has the "kill joy" objection. Again, the kill joy objection asserts that attitudinal models of pleasure go wrong because individuals can have the pro-attitude(s) constitutive of pleasure, i.e. pleased that something is the case (i.e. some state of affairs obtains), toward things which are not fun, joyful, pleasant, or pleasurable. Relatedly, one could take a great deal of attitudinal pleasure in things which many of us intuitively find to be base, disgusting, unworthy of pleasure, etc. Feldman is sensitive to this line of thought that he considers under the aegis of "the objection from worthless pleasures."<sup>458</sup> In order to illustrate the thrust of this objection Feldman imagines "Porky," a person whose sole joy in life is cavorting around with pigs in the pigsty, an activity which he enjoys every minute in which he doing it and takes pleasure in the fact that he is doing it. Considering that Porky experiences a great deal of attitudinal pleasure in the fact that he is cavorting around in the slop all day, Feldman's intrinsic attitudinal hedonism appears committed to Pork's having a great life indeed; that is, Porky has a high level of well-being. Finding Porky's life to be base, wasted, etc., many well-being theorists find the preceding conclusion very counter-intuitive.<sup>459</sup>

Feldman maintains that there are several ways in which he could respond to the challenge posed by Porky's putatively high level of well-being (at least according to an attitudinal model of pleasure). First, he could stipulate that even though Porky's life is ugly, immoral, unproductive, disgusting, etc. that does not mean that his life is

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<sup>458</sup> While this isn't exactly the same point made by the kill-joy objection, the underlying issues are the same.

<sup>459</sup> I consider a variant of this case for desire-satisfaction theories, i.e. "the argument from base desires," in section 4.3.0.

*bad for him.*<sup>460</sup> In fact, as stipulated, it is quite the opposite. One has to remember that when evaluating Porky's well-being, one is considering how Porky's life is *for him*, not how choice worthy we find it ourselves. I believe that what is driving our intuition that Porky has a low level of well-being is the fact his life is bereft of *perfectionist* goods (i.e. achievement, the exercise and perfection of his distinctively human capacities, etc.) and value. As I have argued at length, however, there are many good reasons not to identify prudential value with perfectionist value, including, it courts serious worries about alienation because there is no necessary relationship between an individual's idiosyncratic evaluative makeup (including his evaluative perspective) and what the perfection of his characteristically human capacities consists in. In fact, as we will see in the next chapter, I believe that individuals like Porky are actually experiencing a high level of well-being; i.e. their lives are high in prudential value (through, most likely bereft of many other sorts of values which we care about).

### 3.4.1 *Pleasure and Worthiness*

Feldman does not opt for availing himself of the preceding response to the challenge posed by Porky's case. Instead, he emphasizes that in its attitudinal form (and in light of its propositional nature) hedonism focuses on pleasures and pains that involve, or have, *objects*. By "objects" Feldman means the states of affairs that are the subjects of attitudinal pleasure and pain. Feldman believes that when it comes to these objects it is reasonable to describe certain states of affairs by saying that they "deserve to be objects of pleasure." One ought to note, however, that with an appeal to "desert" Feldman incorporates *normative*, and what I believe to be non-hedonic, elements into his theory of prudential value. More specifically, Feldman holds that when it comes to those objects (i.e. states of affairs) that "deserve to be objects of

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<sup>460</sup> This is actually the line that well-being as self-realization takes. Namely, that insofar as Porky autonomously has the preceding values, their realization is prudentially value for him.

pleasure” it is “fitting” or “appropriate” that an individual take pleasure in them. He argues, for example:

Consider the state of affairs that consists in some painting’s being genuinely beautiful. It is reasonable to say that this state of affairs deserves to be appreciated. In other words it deserves to have someone take intrinsic attitudinal pleasure in it. Similarly if some state of affairs is morally good, then it deserves to be admired or enjoyed. It too deserves to have someone take intrinsic attitudinal pleasure in it.<sup>461</sup>

Feldman thinks that we can identify those objects that are worthy of pleasure as those states of affairs that deserve to have pleasure taken in them. Accordingly, there is an important link between the normative notions of *worthiness* and *desert*. Feldman believes that appealing to these notions makes it possible to “modify our attitudinal hedonism by incorporating an adjustment of value to reflect the pleasure-worthiness and pain-worthiness of objects.”<sup>462</sup> Furthermore, he argues that by appealing to the prudential value that a state of affairs has in virtue of its deserving to be the object of attitudinal pleasure his attitudinal hedonism can explain why Porky’s life does not have a high level of well-being: he takes pleasure in objects that are not worthy of pleasure. That is, Porky’s “rolling around in the mud,” “eating slop,” etc. are states of affairs which do not deserve, and are not worthy of, his taking pleasure in the fact that he is doing them. More abstractly, Feldman believes that certain states of affairs deserve, or are worthy of, certain reactions: some deserve to have pleasure taken in them while others deserve to have pain taken in them. This manifests itself in Feldman’s theory of prudential value in his belief that an individual is better off when he is taking pleasure in states of affairs that are worthy of this attitude and less well off when he is taking attitudinal pleasure, as Porky is, in a state of affairs which is unworthy of this attitude.

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<sup>461</sup> Feldman, 2012: p. 13.

<sup>462</sup> Feldman, 2012: p. 13.



Feldman believes that by incorporating the normative notions of “desert” and “worthiness” into his attitudinal hedonism he can respond to the criticism that hedonism is the “philosophy of the swine” because the objects that an individual like Porky takes pleasure in, i.e. those worthy only for a swine, are states of affairs (i.e. objects) that are unworthy of having pleasure taken in them. There is, however, a serious problem with this move. That is, in incorporating the idea that certain states of affairs are more “pleasure-worthy” than others, Feldman incorporates non-hedonic elements into his theory.<sup>463</sup> That is, by appealing to *desert* and *worthiness* Feldman is no longer focused solely on the character of an individual’s mental states<sup>464</sup> but also on the nature of the intentional objects of those states. It is the states of affairs’ features, i.e. their having the property of “deserving to have pleasure/pain taken in them,”<sup>465</sup> which contributes to an individual’s well-being if and only if she has a “proper” or “apt” attitude toward them. This in itself is not a serious problem until one realizes that there is no necessary connection between what makes some state of affairs worthy of having pleasure taken in it and an individual’s idiosyncratic makeup/evaluative perspective, i.e. what that individual values. That is, insofar as a person does not have any sort of positive orientation (e.g. does not value) toward those states of affairs which Feldman asserts are worthy of one’s taking attitudinal pleasure in their being the case, Feldman’s theory courts worries about alienation. Otherwise put, the normative features that Feldman believes make these states of affairs worthy of attitudinal pleasure may simply leave an individual cold.<sup>466</sup> Conversely, insofar as one is like Porky and has a positive orientation toward those states of affairs that Feldman maintains are not worthy of this orientation (e.g. values

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<sup>463</sup> In particular, he looks like a hybrid theorist.

<sup>464</sup> I.e. whether or not an individual is taking pleasure in the fact that a certain state of affairs obtains.

<sup>465</sup> I.e. their being worth of this pro-attitude.

<sup>466</sup> I.e. he maybe alienated from them.

some aspect of them), his theory cannot capture the subjective intuition. In either case, Feldman's hedonism cannot capture those theoretical desiderata that hedonism was putatively well-suited to capture and which helped to ensure its normative adequacy and authority. Finally, in light of his appeal to "worthiness" Feldman's intrinsic attitudinal hedonism is saddled with having to provide an account of objective "worthiness," i.e. prudential value, and just like objective theories that are confronted with this same task, will court all of the problems facing such approaches.

### **3.5 What We Learn From Hedonism's Failures**

Ultimately, sensation and attitudinal models of hedonism fail for similar reasons. That is, both fail to tie an individual's well-being closely enough to a person's concerns, i.e. those things that matter to him (what I have called "his values"). Accordingly, they fail to capture the subjective intuition and offer an alienating conception of individuals' good because they both override the authority of well-being subjects (and/or their idiosyncratic/evaluative makeups) to determine which things are good for them. The sensation model does this by stipulating that more pleasure/enjoyment is always better than less regardless of an individual's orientation toward such enjoyment. The attitudinal model does this by stipulating that some states of affairs are objectively more "deserving of having pleasure taken in them" than others regardless of a person's orientation toward (i.e. whether or not that individual values) those states of affairs. Consequently, both of these theories fail to preserve the sovereignty that an individual's idiosyncratic makeup has in the determination of what is good for that individual; capturing this sovereignty was, however, supposed to be one of subjective theories' (like hedonism) chief theoretical selling points.

## Chapter Four: Desire-Satisfaction Theories of Well-Being

I want the world  
I want the whole world  
I want to lock it all up in my pocket  
It's my bar of chocolate  
Give it to me  
Now!

I want today  
I want tomorrow  
I want to wear 'em like braids in my hair  
And I don't want to share 'em

I want a party with roomfuls of laughter  
Ten thousand tons of ice cream  
And if I don't get the things I am after  
I'm going to scream!

-Veruca Salt (Julie Dawn Cole) in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

### 4.1 Introductory Remarks

The final type of theory of well-being I consider, and presently the most prominent type of subjective theory of well-being, are “desire-satisfaction” theories. Part of the reason that desire-satisfaction theories have proven so attractive is that they appear ideally suited to capture the subjective intuition and avoid offering an alienating conception of an individual’s good. In fact, this motivation, i.e. capturing the subjective intuition and avoiding alienation worries, is explicitly cited by several of the theorists I consider, e.g. Railton and Rosati. Ultimately, however, some of the “idealization” conditions that these theorists, especially Railton, embrace in order to correct for “defective” desires ends up causing them to court worries about alienation. In contrast, well-being as self-realization can capture the subjective intuition, avoid worries about alienation, and give due credit to desire-satisfaction theories by recognizing that some modes of valuing might include desires so that one is better off by their satisfaction. In addition, well-being as self-realization can avoid what many have taken to be one of the most serious problems facing desire-satisfaction theories of well-being: the scope problem. Finally, where many desire-satisfaction theories

have encountered problems explaining putative cases of self-sacrifice, well-being as self-realization avoid such worries. Simply put, well-being as self-realization beats desire-satisfaction theories at their own game: it captures their putative primary strength while avoiding their theoretical pitfalls. Before demonstrating the ways in which it does this, it is worth considering the broad contours of desire-satisfaction theories.

At their broadest, desire-satisfaction theories maintain that what makes something good for an individual, i.e. what the “prudential good making feature” is, is that it is a state of affairs which satisfies some desire that individual has. Accordingly, these theories maintain that an individual is faring well, i.e. has a high level of well-being, to the extent that the state(s) of affairs obtains in which his desires are satisfied.<sup>467</sup> The most rudimentary form of desire-satisfaction theories is “present desire” desire-satisfaction accounts. Theories of this type maintain that an individual is made better off to the extent that his or her current desires are satisfied. As one might imagine, this rather unsophisticated form of desire-satisfaction theory runs headlong into the problem that individuals often have impulsive or spur-of-the-moment desires whose satisfaction would not contribute to their long (or even short) term well-being. For example, an individual who is temporarily suffering from depression may desire to kill or harm himself. Now assuming that this desire is the result of a short-lived psychological/physical condition (i.e. severe depression) it seems wildly counter-intuitive to maintain that the fulfillment of this (albeit strong) desire would contribute to this individual’s well-being.

Expanding out from a present-desire satisfaction theory, one might endorse a “comprehensive desire” satisfaction theory according to which what matters for a

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<sup>467</sup> Several theories qualify this by stipulating that the satisfaction of “stronger” desires contributes more to an individual’s well-being than weaker desires. As one might imagine, there are several ways of understanding “stronger” or “weaker.”

person's well-being is the overall level of desire-satisfaction in that individual's life *as a whole*. A "summative" version of this theory would hold, for instance, that the more desire-fulfillment in a life, the higher its level of well-being. While this sort of approach might allow one to avoid the problems posed by both one-off destructive desires and short-term desires whose satisfaction frustrates more desires in the long run, they are undermined, as Parfit notes in *Reasons and Persons*, by certain cases of addiction.<sup>468</sup> Imagine, for example, a highly addictive drug whose primary effect was to cause one to have a very strong desire to take the drug every morning. Further, imagine that taking this drug would give one no pleasure, but failure to take it would cause one great pain. Finally, imagine that getting one's hands on the drug is very easy and it costs nothing. In this case, it seems that according to a desire-satisfaction theory a person's creating this addiction in himself would make his life wonderful indeed (i.e. it would have a very high level of well-being). This is because such an individual regularly has very strong desires that he is able to easily satisfy. This, however, seems like a very counter-intuitive verdict for a theory of well-being to offer. That is, it is not at all clear why or how it could be in one's best interest to create in oneself an addiction to a drug that does not have any positive effect on one. The problems posed by the preceding sorts of cases (as well as others I consider in due course) have driven the majority of desire-satisfaction theorists to offer "idealized" desire-satisfaction theories of well-being. Before turning to the nature of such idealization it is worth stepping back and considering the reasons why well-being theorists have been attracted to desire-satisfaction theories of well-being in the first place.

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<sup>468</sup> Parfit, D. (1986). *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 498.

#### 4.1.1 What's So Great About Desire(s)?

There are several reasons why well-being theorists have been drawn to desire-satisfaction theories. First and foremost, desire-satisfaction theories appear better-equipped than the other major theories of well-being, e.g. Objective-List and Hedonist approaches, to capture the subjective intuition because an individual's desires, which typically relate to that individual's aim, goals, etc., seem particularly well-suited to capture those things which matter the most to the quality of an individual's life (for him). Put more technically, desire-satisfaction theories "best respects the idea that, when it comes to what is good *for* a person, the person herself has to be a kind of authority...*constitutively*, in that the person's particular predilections determine what is good for her."<sup>469</sup> Relatedly, desire-satisfaction theorists maintain that desires provide the "fit" that many well-being theorists<sup>470</sup> believe must exist between an individual and his good. This fit is often understood as requiring that an individual's good ought to "resonate" with him such that it is something that he does or could care about or be motivated by. Insofar as one thinks that an individual either must be or would be positively oriented toward what is good for him, desires seem like a good candidate to capture this positive orientation. If the preceding considerations are met, desire-satisfaction theories ought to be able to capture the subjective intuition and avoid offering an alienating conception of an individual's good.

Desire-satisfaction theories of well-being also appear to have a way to respond to one of the more damning objections against hedonism: the experience machine. To see this imagine, for example, that an individual desires to climb Mt. Everest. Now, when this individual is in the experience machine, forms the desire to climb Mt. Everest, and is fed electrical impulses that make him believe that he is climbing Mt.

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<sup>469</sup> Heathwood, C. (2011). Desire-Based Theories of Reasons, Pleasure, and Welfare. In *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* (Vol. 6, pp. 79–106). p.101.

<sup>470</sup> At least, any theorist that has any "subjectivist" tendencies.

Everest, he *thinks* that he is climbing Mt. Everest and that his desire is being satisfied. Obviously, however, his desire is not being satisfied. The same goes for any other sort of desire an individual in the experience machine has: he may think that his desires are being satisfied, but they are not. Accordingly, desire-satisfaction theories are able to capture the intuition that an individual who is in the experience machine has a low level of well-being because, despite (extraordinarily veridical) appearances, none of that individual's desires are being satisfied. Slightly more technically, because desires are *intentional*, i.e. they are "about" something, namely about a certain state-of-affairs being the case (specifically, the one in which an individual's desire is satisfied), desire-satisfaction theories are "state-of-the-world" theories. This allows them to avoid "experience machine" type objections. This solution is not, however, without its costs. That is, in focusing upon the "state-of-the-world" (i.e. that state in which an individual's desire is satisfied) desire-satisfaction theories must recognize that this state (i.e. a desire's satisfaction) can come about outside of an individual's experience or awareness. It seems odd or counter-intuitive, however, to maintain that something that never "enters an individual's life" could be good for that person. This is what gives rise to "the scope problem," an issue that I discuss, and offer a way to avoid, later in the chapter.

While many consider desire's intentional nature to be a theoretically desirable feature because, for instance, it helps a theory to capture the subjective intuition and avoid the problems posed by the experience machine, it creates some problems. Besides the scope problem, many desires are putatively prudentially "defective" for the following reason. Because a desire is always about some future state of affairs (i.e. the state of affairs in which it is satisfied), it at best represents a person's *ex ante* expectation that the resulting state of affairs (i.e. one's desire being fulfilled) will

bring one some (prudential) benefit. It goes without saying, however, that it is a common enough occurrence that this expectation may be disappointed by the *ex post* experience of the state (of satisfaction). Put more simply, sometimes a person's getting what he wants does not make him better off. This fact, in addition to some sorts of desires being putatively "defective" in one way or another, e.g. irrational, ill-informed, etc., has resulted in its becoming common for desire-satisfaction theories to stipulate that the only desires that are relevant to an individual's well-being are those that are, for example, sufficiently rational, considered, informed, vivid, or otherwise "corrected." One of the more popular ways in which this manifests itself is by desire-satisfaction theories maintaining that the only desires whose satisfaction is prudentially valuable are those that one's "Ideal Advisor" would want for one to want for one's own sake. Regardless of their particular details, whatever idealization conditions a desire-satisfaction theory adopts, its effect will be to screen out some of an individual's actual desires. The challenge then becomes, how can a theory weed out desires that are imprudent and only posit as prudentially valuable those desires that resonate with an individual (lest it court worries about alienation)?

In light of the preceding considerations, this chapter is organized as follows. First, I consider some of the ways in which desire-satisfaction theories "idealize" or "correct" an individual's desires so as to rule out those that are not prudentially valuable. Next I consider some of the problems accompanying such idealization, namely its causing idealized desire-satisfaction theories to offer an alienating conception of an individual's good thereby making them unable to capture the subjective intuition. In light of this well-being as self-realization takes an "actualist" approach and eschews idealization altogether: what is prudentially valuable for an individual is the realization of that individual's *actual* values. In addition to avoiding



the alienation worries that plague idealized desire-satisfaction views, I demonstrate how well-being as self-realization can avoid two of the major theoretical obstacles facing desire-satisfaction theories: the scope problem and the argument from self-sacrifice.

#### 4.2 “Idealized” Desire-Satisfaction Theories

While desire-satisfaction is an attractive candidate for what is intrinsically prudentially valuable many well-being theorists believe that a viable desire-satisfaction theory of well-being is going to need some sort of “screening” mechanism to rule out those desires whose satisfaction is not prudentially valuable. In light of this I want to begin by considering various forms of *informed* (i.e. *corrected*) desire-satisfaction accounts. In recent times, these theories have (broadly) followed the approach taken by Richard Brandt in *A Theory of the Good in the Right*.<sup>471</sup> Here Brandt held that an individual’s good consists in the satisfaction of those desires that individual would have after “relevant information [about that individual’s pre-existing desires] registered fully...if the person repeatedly represented to themselves, in an ideally vivid way, and at an appropriate time, the available information which is relevant in the sense that it would make a difference to desires and aversions if they thought of it.”<sup>472</sup> Brandt thought that this process is best manifested in a program of cognitive psychotherapy. In addition to this sort of approach, which simply “cleans up” an individual’s pre-existing set of desires, are *ideal advisor* desire-satisfaction theories. Ideal Advisor theories are motivated by the idea that an individual can only truly be in a position to effectively evaluate whether some desire is informed, rational, etc., and whether pursuing/satisfying one desire over another would be in his prudential best interest if he could simultaneously have enough information about

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<sup>471</sup> Brandt, R. *A Theory of the Good and the Right* (Oxford: 1979).

<sup>472</sup> Brandt, 1979. p. 11

what it would be like to live those lives which result from pursuing one desire over another. One can think of this type of desire-satisfaction theory as maintaining that what is good for an individual is what that individual would desire (or desire his non-idealized self to desire) from, as Rosati puts it, “a “bird’s-eye point of view,” i.e. a standpoint fully informed about our possible lives that we as individuals might occupy but that would encompass all the distinct points of view we would have as the persons leading these different lives.”<sup>473</sup> One of the main desire-satisfaction theorists I consider, Peter Railton, opts for an ideal advisor approach, so it is worthwhile to take a moment to consider its historical lineage.

Theories of well-being, prudential value, or non-moral good, that maintain that an individual’s good consists in those desires that an individual would have<sup>474</sup> from a “bird’s-eye view” have a historical lineage going as far back as Sidgwick’s *The Method of Ethics*. Here Sidgwick argued that “a man’s future good on the whole” consists in “what he would now desire and seek on the whole if all the consequences of all the different lines of conduct open to him were accurately foreseen and adequately realized in imagination at the present point of time.”<sup>475</sup> More recently, Rawls identified a person’s good with his or her “rational plan of life” i.e. that plan “that would be decided upon as the outcome of careful reflection in which the agent reviewed, in the light of all the relevant facts, what it would be like to carry out these plans and thereby ascertained the course of action that would best realize his more fundamental desires.”<sup>476</sup> In the past couple of decades Railton’s conception of an individual’s non-moral good, i.e. what is prudentially valuable for that individual, has

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<sup>473</sup> Rosati, C. S. (1995). Persons, Perspectives, and Full Information Accounts of the Good. *Ethics*, 105(2), 296–325. p. 297.

<sup>474</sup> Or, more specifically, would desire for his non-idealized self to desire for his own sake.

<sup>475</sup> Sidgwick, H. (1907). *The Methods of Ethics* (7th ed.). London: Macmillan and Company Ltd. p. 111-112.

<sup>476</sup> Rawls, J. (2005). *A Theory of Justice: Original Edition*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press. p. 417.

proven attractive to many subsequent desire-satisfaction theorists, in part, because of its putative naturalism and ability to capture the subjective intuition and avoid worries about alienation. Consequently, it is worth considering his theory in-depth in order to see both its theoretical strengths and weaknesses, i.e. whether it can capture the subjective intuition and avoid offering an alienating conception of an individual's good.

#### *4.2.1 Just Relax and Have a 7-Up: Ideal Advisor Desire-Satisfaction Theories of Well-Being*

Railton's Ideal Advisor desire-satisfaction theory of well-being gets its clearest expression in his "Moral Realism"<sup>477</sup> and "Facts and Values."<sup>478</sup> Both here (and elsewhere) a large part of the motivation behind Railton's conception of non-moral good<sup>479</sup> is his espousing internalism about prudential value judgments. In particular, while Railton does not think that *all* normative judgments must find internal resonance to whom they apply,<sup>480</sup> he thinks that "it does seem to me to capture an important feature of the concept of intrinsic value to say that what is intrinsically valuable for a person must have a connection with what he would find in some degree compelling or attractive if he were rational and aware."<sup>481</sup> As we have seen, this is exactly what lies behind the subjective intuition and it belies Railton's sensitivity to worries about alienation, i.e. that it would be an intolerably alienating conception of someone's good to imagine that it might fail in any such way to engage him.

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<sup>477</sup> Railton, P. (1986). Moral Realism. *The Philosophical Review*, 95(2), 163–207.

<sup>478</sup> Railton, P. (1999). Facts and Values. In *Facts, Values, and Norms* (pp. 43–68). Cambridge University Press.

<sup>479</sup> Henceforth I will simply refer to non-moral as prudential value.

<sup>480</sup> He leaves it open, for example, that not everyone has reason to act in accordance with what has the most aesthetic or moral value.

<sup>481</sup> Railton, 1999: p. 47.

When it comes to the nature of “the good” or “goodness,” Railton denies that there is any such thing as absolute goodness (i.e. goodness simpliciter). That is, he does not think that there is anything that is good in and of itself irrespective of what or whom it might be good *for* or the good *of*.<sup>482</sup> That being said, he does think that there is *relational* goodness.<sup>483</sup> Railton traces the lineage of “relational” theories of non-moral goodness, specifically desire-satisfaction theories, to Hobbes. Hobbes held that to call something “good” is always to speak of someone’s good and that the only sense in which something can be good for someone is that he *desires* it.<sup>484</sup> Accordingly, to call something part of someone’s *intrinsic* good implies that that individual has reason to desire it for its own sake.<sup>485</sup> While such an approach appears to capture the internalist requirement and/or subjective intuition, Hobbes’ focus on an individual’s *actual* desires renders it incapable of capturing the critical and self-critical character of value judgments. Again, individuals sometimes desire things whose satisfaction is not in their best interest.<sup>486</sup> Accordingly, Railton notes that even if one is an internalist about prudential value, one still must find some grounds for criticism among the things that actually or possibly find some internal resonance in an individual, i.e. his desires. That is, one needs a way of criticizing, i.e. screening out, some of an individual’s actual desires.

One way in which Railton motivates the importance of a desire-satisfaction theory’s taking a critical approach toward an individual’s desires is by imagining “Beth,”<sup>487</sup> a successful and happy accountant who, despite her happiness, wants above

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<sup>482</sup> Here one can see an explicit rejection of “locative” analyses of goodness of the sort that one saw in chapter two in my discussion of G.E. Moore and Guy Fletcher.

<sup>483</sup> See section 2.1.3 for more on a “relational” conception of goodness.

<sup>484</sup> Hobbes, T. (1981). *Levithan*. (C. B. MacPherson, Ed.). Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin. p. 120.

<sup>485</sup> Railton, 1999: p. 49.

<sup>486</sup> E.g. self-destructive desires, or desires that are ill-informed and whose satisfaction would frustrate an individual’s other desires.

<sup>487</sup> Railton, 1999: p. 50.

all to quit her day job and devote herself full-time to creative writing (one of her hobbies). Unfortunately for Beth, she has neither the skill nor the temperament to be a writer. Ultimately, after years of finding no success with her writing, Beth looks back on the fruitless years she spent writing and concludes that she “paid too high a price in lost well-being and self-confidence for the information that she is not suited to writing.”<sup>488</sup> Railton maintains that what this judgment does is distinguish between Beth’s good at a time and what she most desired at that time. That is, Beth’s later (better informed) self is able to see that what her earlier self desired most strongly did not ultimately enhance her well-being. Further, Railton thinks that this judgment can capture the intuition underlying internalism about prudential value because it is Beth *herself* who feels (or, he believes, ought to feel) the evaluative/normative force of her later better informed self’s desires. That is, earlier Beth ought to take her later, better informed, viewpoint as having normative force because, after all, it is hers. This is how, he believes, his ideal advisor view is able to capture the internalist intuition and be normatively adequate and authoritative.

Railton is attracted to a desire-based Ideal Advisor view, in part, because of what he believes to be the nature of desires. In particular, he maintains that what it is to have a desire is, among other things, to care whether that desire is satisfied.<sup>489</sup> In light of this, Railton believes that insofar as fuller information would contribute to the satisfaction of a desire, the advice of someone who has this fuller information<sup>490</sup> and is (in one way or another) a “corrected”<sup>491</sup> version of oneself<sup>492</sup> will (or ought to) have recommending, commending, or normative force. These considerations lead Railton

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<sup>488</sup> Railton, 1999: p. 52.

<sup>489</sup> Interestingly, and I discuss this later in the chapter, I believe a similar claim can be made about an individual’s values; i.e. that what it is to value something is, among other thing, to care about whether that value is realized.

<sup>490</sup> And who desires something for one for one’s own sake.

<sup>491</sup> I.e. insofar as one’s advisor is idealized in ways other than full information.

<sup>492</sup> Thereby making this individual an ideal advisor.

to the following proposal of the nature of prudential good: “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.”<sup>493</sup>

One of the advantages of the preceding conception of prudential value, i.e. an “ideal advisor” account of prudential good, Railton argues, is that it is able to both capture and explain the normative force of judgments about an individual’s good (i.e. it is normatively authoritative). He maintains that it is able to do this because “it gives expression to an idea of appropriateness or *fitness* to an end for an agent.”<sup>494</sup> This “fitness,” as he understands it, consists in there being a match between an agent’s motivational system and his capacities and circumstances (where all are accurately represented and appreciated by one’s ideal advisor). Put more simply, what is good for an individual is something that he (at least hypothetically)<sup>495</sup> will desire or care about, i.e. be “moved” by.<sup>496</sup> Railton believes that the upshot of these considerations is that an individual’s *intrinsic* good consists in “the attainment of what he would in idealized circumstances want to want for his own self...were he to assume the place of his actual self.”<sup>497</sup> This account of prudential value will, he argues, capture the internalist requirement/subjective intuition because it leaves open the possibility that what is good for an individual varies from person to person. After all, we all have different desires and there is no reason to think that the idealization of an individual’s capacities would change this.

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<sup>493</sup> Railton, 1999: p. 54.

<sup>494</sup> Railton, 1999: p. 54.

<sup>495</sup> “Hypothetically” because of the various idealization conditions.

<sup>496</sup> This is another way of articulating a “resonance constraint.”

<sup>497</sup> Railton, 1999: p. 55.

In addition to drawing upon Beth's case in order to demonstrate the importance of taking a critical approach toward an individual's actual desires, Railton also advocates for an Ideal Advisor approach in *Moral Realism* by drawing a distinction between an individual's "subjective" interests and his "objective-subjective" interests. The former, Railton maintains, are an individual's *actual* wants or desires (either conscious or unconscious), while the latter are what an individual would want or desire for himself were he to have unqualified cognitive and imaginative powers as well as full factual and nomological information about his physical and psychological constitution, capacities, circumstances, history, and so on.<sup>498</sup> In order to illustrate what this distinction looks like in practice, Railton offers the example of "Lonnie," a traveler in a foreign country who is feeling miserable in virtue of the fact (unbeknownst to him) that he is dehydrated.<sup>499</sup> Desiring to feel better, Lonnie turns to something that is familiar and has proved comforting in the past: a tall glass of milk. In light of this desire, it is in his subjective interest to get his hands on and drink a glass of milk. Now, while Railton concedes that Lonnie finds a glass of milk desirable, he offers that *it is not desirable for him*. To see this, imagine an *idealized* version of Lonnie, "Lonnie+" (i.e. Lonnie's Ideal Advisor) who knows what is really wrong with Lonnie: he is dehydrated, a condition which, unfortunately, is often not detectable from introspective evidence. Unfortunately for Lonnie, milk is hard to digest and will worsen his dehydration. In light of his full information Lonnie+ comes to desire that were he Lonnie he would desire to drink clear liquids, e.g. a bottle of 7-up, rather than milk.

Railton maintains that what Lonnie+ is sensitive to (and forms his desires for Lonnie based upon) are Lonnie's *objective subjective interest(s)*. These objective

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<sup>498</sup> Railton, 1986: p. 174.

<sup>499</sup> Railton, 1986: p. 174.

subjective interests have their basis in “facts about Lonnie’s circumstances and constitution, which determine, among other things, his existing tastes and his ability to acquire certain new tastes, the consequences of continued dehydration, the effects and availability of various sorts of liquids, and so on.”<sup>500</sup> The distinction between the two sorts of subjective desires leads to a further clarification of Railton’s conception of non-moral/prudential good: “X is *non-morally good for A* if and only if X would satisfy an objective interest of A;” and that A+’s views about what he would want to want were he in A’s place “generat[e] a ranking of potential objective interests of A, a ranking that will reflect what is better or worse for A and will allow us to speak of A’s actual wants as better or worse approximations of what is best for him.”<sup>501</sup> Part of what drives Railton’s understanding of objective subjective interests, and, by extension, his account of non-moral (prudential) good, is his commitment to naturalism and his belief that his Ideal Advisor account can provide an entirely reductionist conception of an individual’s non-moral good. Relatedly, his conception of non-moral value is very much “relational”<sup>502</sup> in that non-moral values<sup>503</sup> only exist because humans<sup>504</sup> do and that humans’ objective subjective interests are supervenient upon natural and social facts. Unfortunately, Railton’s idealization procedure, i.e. his appeal to an ideal advisor results in his offering an alienating conception of an individual’s good which cannot capture the subjective intuition and which, consequently, lacks normative authority.

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<sup>500</sup> Railton, 1986: p. 175.

<sup>501</sup> Railton, 1986: p. 176.

<sup>502</sup> In the same way in which Korsgaard’s conception of non-moral good is.

<sup>503</sup> And other values.

<sup>504</sup> I.e. valuers.



#### 4.2.2 *Why Should I Care About What You Want For Me?*

At first glance Railton's conception of prudential value is attractive because it appears to capture the subjectivity<sup>505</sup> that many take to be a hallmark of prudential value. Accordingly, his a formulation of a desire-satisfaction theory (along with its accompanying idealization) ought to be able to avoid the alienation worries that plague Objective-List and Hedonist theories of well-being. Further, it seems to offer a normatively authoritative conception of an individual's good because a person's idealized advisor is still him, so that the advisor's desires concerning him ought to have normative authority. There are, however, serious problems with this sort of idealization. These problems, and their ultimate consequences for the normative adequacy and theoretical viability of Ideal Advisor theories of well-being, are given forceful articulation by Rosati in her "Full Information Accounts of the Good."<sup>506</sup> The first such challenge that Rosati offers is that while a "fully informed" person<sup>507</sup> is purportedly oneself,<sup>508</sup> such an individual is not *necessarily* someone whose desires, judgments, etc., one would find to be (normatively) authoritative because one might, for example, be alienated from them. This being the case, ideal advisor views lack normative force.<sup>509</sup> Rosati also argues that because of what it is like to be a person, i.e. to have a particular evaluative perspective, there is good reason to think that no person (or, for that matter, no ideal advisor) can be fully informed.

As Railton argues, and as Rosati notes, an Ideal Advisor's perspective (and desires therefrom), or, a "bird's-eye point of view," putatively carries normative force because "we expect our desires and reactions from this standpoint to settle our good

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<sup>505</sup> Along with the subjective/internalist intuitions.

<sup>506</sup> Rosati, C. S. (1995). Persons, Perspectives, and Full Information Accounts of the Good. *Ethics*, 105(2), 296–325.

<sup>507</sup> I.e. an "Ideal Advisor"

<sup>508</sup> After all, this is how Railton attempts to argue that this is why this individual's desires, judgments, etc. are authoritative for one.

<sup>509</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 299.

in a way that our actual desires do not.”<sup>510</sup> That is, because an ideal advisor is stipulated as having the same personality as an individual’s unidealized self<sup>511</sup> there is reason to think that his judgments about what is good for one, i.e. the desires he wants one to have for one’s own sake, have normative/recommending/authoritative force. Rosati argues that in order to capture the preceding force, a normatively adequate (i.e. authoritative) account of a person’s good must effect not only a motivational connection between a person and his good, but also what she calls a “double motivational link.” Rosati describes this link thusly. The first link effects a motivational connection between an individual and his good under counterfactual, specifically “ideal,” conditions such that “something X can be good for a person only if she would care about or desire it for her actual self, at least under ideal conditions.”<sup>512</sup> The need for a second link arises, Rosati argues, because there are many sets of “ideal” or “fully informed” conditions. Accordingly, when the second double-motivational link is made it “effects a motivational connection between an individual and information about her counterfactual desires or concerns,” such that “a person must be capable of caring under ordinary optimal conditions<sup>513</sup> about the fact that she would care about X for her actual self under a specified set of ideal conditions.”<sup>514</sup>

In light of Railton’s, Rosati’s, and my own commitments to respecting and capturing the subjective intuition, we are committed to its being the case that a person’s good cannot be completely alien to her. That is, it cannot resolutely fail to

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<sup>510</sup> Rosati, 1999: p. 299.

<sup>511</sup> That is, Railton and other Ideal Advisor theorists typically posit that throughout the process of idealization an individual’s “personality” is held constant.

<sup>512</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 300.

<sup>513</sup> By “ordinary optimal conditions” Rosati means whatever normally attainable conditions we ordinarily regard as optimal for reflecting on judgments about our good. Such conditions include that a person be paying attention, that she be free from emotional distress of neurotic worries, and that she does not overlook readily available information. (Rosati, 1995: p. 301).

<sup>514</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 301.

resonate with her in any way at all. Rosati notes that there are two ways in which something can be alien to a person: “it may be something that she is incapable of caring about under any condition(s) whatsoever; or it may be something she would care about only under conditions that are irrelevant to the concerns persons typically have when they wonder whether something is good for them.”<sup>515,516</sup> Part of the way in which ideal advisor views attempt to avoid worries about alienation and capture the subjective intuition is by only idealizing a person’s epistemic condition(s), i.e. they hold a person’s personality constant, only permitting changes that would result from fully informing her and improving her reasoning. The purpose behind this sort of idealization is avoiding importing any substantive evaluative judgments into one’s account. Avoiding such judgments is important because, as one saw in chapter two, importing substantive value commitments or judgments into one’s account of personal good risks raising worries about alienation and can prevent a theory from capturing the subjective intuition or internalist requirement. It is sensitivity to these considerations that prompts ideal advisor theories to “attempt to isolate with respect to each person what someone like *her* would come to desire with full information, thereby allowing each individual to serve as her own ideal advisor.”<sup>517</sup> Ideally then, because ideal advisor views hold an individual’s personality constant, and constrain counterfactual ideal conditions to meet those epistemic conditions we ordinarily are in when we wonder whether something is good for us, they should be able to capture

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<sup>515</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 301. Relatedly, Rosati believes that “unless a person would care, at least under ordinary optimal conditions, about the fact that she would want something under a certain set of counterfactual conditions, an account of a person’s good will be hard pressed to explain how it is that judgments about her good normally have recommending force.” (Rosati, 1995: p. 302).

<sup>516</sup> Besides an account of an individual’s good not being alien to him, Rosati agrees with Railton about the critical character of a person’s good. That is, a person’s good must meet certain “justificatory requirements” such that something is good for a person only if it meets certain epistemic standards or standards of rational consideration. The intuition underlying this is rooted in the fact that we believe that our desires are more defensible to the extent that they are better informed and rationally based.

<sup>517</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 303.

both the critical character and recommending force that we take our judgments about our good to have.

#### 4.2.3 *The Problems With Idealization*

Ideal Advisor views promise to give us a normatively authoritative and non-alienating conception of an individual's good. I now want to turn to the two main problems they face which Rosati rightly focuses upon. To begin with, Rosati maintains that if an account of what it is for a person to be fully informed (i.e. to be an *ideal* advisor) is going to have normative force it must overcome what she calls the "problem of appreciation": the problem of the gap between merely having information and appreciating it.<sup>518</sup> Many prominent desire satisfaction theories attempt to solve or avoid this problem by maintaining that the information that one receives through the process of idealization must be well-timed and *maximally vivid* in order to span the gap between the mere receipt of information and the appreciation of it. While there are several ways in which philosophers have understood "maximally vivid," Rosati abstracts away from any particular understanding and offers the general formulation that "a person has received information in a maximally vivid way when no more detailed representations of it in yet different media or modes of representation would further alter her reactions."<sup>519</sup> Accordingly, she maintains that a person is fully informed when "she has received all information in a maximally vivid way and so has no doubt about its truth, and when no further repetitions or differently timed presentations of that information will further alter her reactions to it."<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 304.

<sup>519</sup> This approach, Rosati argues, avoids two difficulties: first it avoids the hopeless task of trying to explain which representations of information are most vivid and second, one avoids treating information as maximally vivid only when it motivates the recipient in a specific way, which would risk importing substantive evaluative judgments (Rosati, 1995: p. 306).

<sup>520</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 307.

While this will be unpacked in the following pages, put succinctly, the reason that Rosati maintains that ideal advisor views lack normative force is that “a person will have to be changed markedly to become fully informed, and Ideal Advisor views lack the resources to guarantee that the fully informed person, though purportedly oneself, is someone whose reactions an individual either will or should regard as authoritative.”<sup>521</sup> According to Railton, the problem of appreciation, i.e. the problem of understanding how one receives information in a “maximally vivid” way, is solved by stipulating that an ideal advisor undergoes (or has) any education or experience(s) necessary in order to render information maximally vivid. Rosati maintains, however, that the problem of appreciation arises not because of the need for an individual to have further experiences or education, but that it has its root in *what it is like to be a particular person*. She notes, for instance, that we intuitively think that any particular person will be unable to appreciate certain facts (i.e. information) given what he is like (i.e. given his idiosyncratic makeup). Put more technically, “because of her intellectual and psychological features...[an individual] occupies a point of view, a perspective from which she views the world and which determines what can be informing for her. Her features affect what can be received and how it will be assimilated.”<sup>522</sup> That is, what an individual is like, e.g. her psychological features, affects what can be informing for her.

If a person’s ability to appreciate information (and, consequently, possess knowledge) depends upon his being capable of receiving it, then there is good reason to think that this capability will require more than simply eliminating an individual’s cognitive shortcomings and lack of information (i.e. idealizing that individual’s epistemic capacities). As Railton rightly notes, some barriers to appreciating

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<sup>521</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 307.

<sup>522</sup> Rosati, 1995. P. 308.

information can be overcome only if an individual *has certain experiences* of the sort that render information fully vivid. That being said, it seems rather intuitive that the experiences a person must undergo in order to appreciate information may enable her to appreciate it only by changing her quite dramatically.<sup>523</sup> Accordingly, in order for an ideal advisor to do his job, i.e. in order for him to compare and assess what various possible lives would be like (say, if one satisfies one desire over another) so that he can desire that his unidealized self have certain desires, then he would need to know what the experience of living those lives would be like. It is doubtful, however, whether possessing such knowledge is possible. That is, how a person assesses any given experience<sup>524</sup> depends upon prior experiences.<sup>525</sup> In light of this, Rosati argues that in addition to the problem of appreciation, any ideal advisor that is comparing possible lives is also going to encounter what she calls “the problem of experiential ordering.”

“The problem of experiential ordering” arises because of the fact that how a person experiences something (i.e. the *quality* of an experience or experiences) depends upon the order in which he experiences them. As an especially perspicacious example of this Rosati notes that poverty experienced after wealth is experienced differently than poverty after near poverty or wealth after poverty.<sup>526</sup> This fact has consequences for the viability of ideal advisor theories. In particular, Rosati draws attention to the *enormous* “changes a person would have to undergo to be fully informed about herself, her circumstances, and all the possible trajectories her life might follow.”<sup>527</sup> More concretely, in order to be fully informed, rational, etc., an ideal advisor would have to have capacities of reasoning, memory, imagination, etc.

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<sup>523</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 308.

<sup>524</sup> I.e. how much he or she values, enjoys, etc. it.

<sup>525</sup> In addition, of course, to that individual’s traits and motivational system.

<sup>526</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 309.

<sup>527</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 310.

far surpassing what she actually has. She would have to, for example, “be able to have all of the necessary experiences and keep them clearly before her mind, remembering them as experienced in themselves and as experienced in relation to what comes before and after.”<sup>528</sup> As Rosati notes, even if one assumes that we are still imagining a *person* at the end of the process (after all, no person(s) we are familiar with have the cognitive/psychological/etc. capacities an ideal advisor would have to possess), this person must be *radically different* from the person who underwent idealization.

Putatively, what one learns from the process of idealization is what an individual’s ideal advisor would desire for her to desire for her own sake. Again, because it is stipulated that during the process of idealization an individual’s personality is held constant, ideal advisor theories maintain that after idealization one will have learned what someone “like her” would want/desire in the sense that it was this sort of person who was idealized. That being said, we have not learned what *she* (the individual whose good is under consideration) would want, or even what someone *like her* would want in the sense in which we ordinarily understand these terms.<sup>529</sup> This being the case, it seems that in light of the drastic changes that a person must undergo in order to be a fully informed Ideal(ized) Advisor, Ideal Advisor views do not guarantee that a pre-idealized individual is the same person who occupies the ideal standpoint. That is, it seems reasonable to think that the process of idealization changes an individual to the extent that it seems inappropriate to consider him as being *identical* to his pre-idealized self. One can easily imagine then that an unidealized individual might reasonably maintain that her fully informed and idealized advisor is *not her* and, as such, finds the things which that advisor desires for her to be *alien* to her. Accordingly, she might very well remain unmoved by them,

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<sup>528</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 310.

<sup>529</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 311.

i.e. neither accord them, nor feel, their alleged normative/recommending force. Such desires, which idealized desire satisfaction theories maintain are constitutive of her good, might be alien to her and leave her cold. This being the case, it calls into serious doubt ideal advisor theories' ability to capture the subjective (and internalist) intuition and it demonstrates how their method of idealization risks offering an alienating conception of an individual's good. Otherwise put, ideal advisor theories do not *guarantee* that an individual's fully informed advisor (including their desires which concern one) is someone who one must accord normative authority.<sup>530</sup>

The second major problem facing ideal advisor desire-satisfaction theories concerns whether the notion of an individual's being "fully informed" makes any sense. This challenge has its roots in what it is like to be a particular person with a particular evaluative perspective. That is, because of what it is like for one to be a particular person and occupy a perspective, there is reason to think that no person could be fully informed.<sup>531</sup> While there are several issues that justify one's being skeptical about the possibility of a person's being "fully informed,"<sup>532</sup> I will focus on one particularly serious problem. Specifically, because an individual's idiosyncratic makeup<sup>533</sup> affects the quality of his experience and considering that an individual's makeup can change, there is no such thing as "what an experience is like for me." Instead, there is "what the experience is like for me, given what I am like at time t."<sup>534</sup> Accordingly, the fact that an individual's idiosyncratic makeup affects how that individual experiences things, combined with the further fact that part of being a particular person with particular traits involves occupying a unique idiosyncratic point

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<sup>530</sup> That is, there is no necessary reason why one must regard the judgments of an individual who occupies an ideal standpoint as authoritative.

<sup>531</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 314.

<sup>532</sup> See: Rosati, 1995: p. 314.

<sup>533</sup> I.e. his psychological, physical, volitional, etc., qualities.

<sup>534</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 317.



of view (i.e. one that involves a certain way of seeing, feeling, and evaluating), makes it such that while one's makeup may give one access to certain information, it makes other information inaccessible.<sup>535</sup> If, however an ideal advisor is going to be (and is by definition) *fully informed*, then she must be able to enter all of her possible points of view. This seems impossible, however, because some of those points of view will be in direct conflict with one another, e.g. imagining one's life as an introvert or as an extrovert. These points of view are such that an ideal advisor would not be able to access them both at the same time. Such a comparison is necessary, however, when an ideal advisor is comparing these two points of views (and desires therein) in order to see in which she would be better off.<sup>536</sup> This, after all, is how ideal advisor desire-satisfaction theories determine what is good for an individual. For a concrete example of this Rosati offers the fact that an obtuse person cannot know what it is like to be a sympathetic person, nor can a sympathetic person know what it is like to be an obtuse person. In light of this it seems as if an ideal advisor is faced with an impossible task: comparing what two diametrically opposed lives are like "from the inside" at the same time.

A proponent of an ideal advisor view might respond to the preceding objection, i.e. that an individual cannot be fully informed, by stipulating that fully informing a person would wash away, i.e. eliminate or screen out, those traits that would obstruct that person's access to information (i.e. what certain lives would be like) so that she can compare possible lives. This sort of reply will not work, however, because if fully informing a person would wash away certain traits an individual has (e.g. obtuseness or sympathy), then it would leave her without an idiosyncratic

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<sup>535</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 317.

<sup>536</sup> As Rosati puts this, "the problem concerns how she can occupy a point of view that gives her equal access to viewpoints that may be in direct conflict, each excluding information accessible from the other." (Rosati, 1995: p. 317).

makeup and point of view. As Rosati puts this, an ideal advisor stripped thusly would “have no traits that could lead her to react in one way rather than another to her experience and would therefore lack any reactions that could indicate her good.”<sup>537</sup>

The upshot of these considerations is that the notion of being fully informed, as it is employed by ideal advisor desire-satisfaction theories of well-being, cannot figure into a plausible (i.e. normatively adequate and authoritative) analysis of prudential value.

### 4.3 Exploring An Actualist Approach

If Rosati is right, which the preceding arguments give us reason to think she is, then appealing to an individual’s ideal advisor in determining/defining what is good for him seems fatally flawed for a couple of reasons. First, it appears that this sort of idealization robs desire-satisfaction theories of their normative authority. That is, nothing ensures that one will *necessarily* find one’s idealized self’s desires regarding oneself to be normatively authoritative. As such one might be alienated from them and accord them no normative authority. Second, if an ideal advisor’s possessing “full-information,” specifically as it relates to this information’s being “maximally vivid,” requires that he experience “from the inside” what various *incompatible* lives<sup>538</sup> would be like, then there is good reason to think that no person could be so informed; i.e. informed in the way in which an ideal advisor theory requires. Again, this has its roots in what it is to be a particular person with a particular evaluative perspective. Despite these problems, when one again considers poor Lonnie who just wants to quench his thirst, it seems intuitive to think that if his desire were “cleaned up” even just a little, then he would be better off.

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<sup>537</sup> Rosati, 1995: p. 323.

<sup>538</sup> Incompatible in virtue of the desires, personality attributes, psychological traits, etc., contained therein.

What lies behind the intuition we have about cases like Lonnie and Beth is our intuition that individuals' desires can often be "defective," i.e. their satisfaction does not necessarily make one better off. There are several responses that one can take when faced with the problem of "defective desires." First, one can offer, as Railton and other ideal desire-satisfaction theories have, certain "idealization conditions" that screen out defective desires from those desires whose satisfaction contributes to an individual's well-being. Unfortunately such idealization conditions end up inevitably raising worries about alienation because an individual's idealized advisor's makeup seems necessarily significantly different from one's own makeup so that his desires for one could be quite alien to one. Conversely, one can endorse an "actualist" desire-satisfaction theory of well-being that eschews any idealization conditions at all. This is the sort of approach to idealization (or an eschewal of any idealization) that I adopt. In particular I maintain that an individual's well-being consists in the realization of that individual's *actual* values, not those values that he would have after his idiosyncratic makeup had been suitably idealized. Accordingly, no matter what the content of an individual's values are, realizing those values is good for that individual. Now, considering that well-being as self-realization does not simply "idealize away" defective values, I must explain how it can deal with putatively defective values.

Well-being as self-realization can opt for an "actualist" approach to well-being by utilizing some of the ways in which actualist desire-satisfaction accounts respond to the problems posed by "defective desires." For example, in "The Problem of Defective Desires"<sup>539</sup> Heathwood offers an actualist desire-satisfaction theory of well-being that he defends against objections based on putatively "defective desires." Again, the intuition lying behind these objections is that sometimes individuals are

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<sup>539</sup> Heathwood, C. (2005). The Problem of Defective Desires. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 83(4), 487–504.

not made better off<sup>540</sup> by having their desires satisfied. The onus is upon my theory to either be able to capture this intuition or explain it away. That is, I must explain how well-being as self-realization deals with cases of putatively “defective values.” One could argue that values can be defective in much of the same way in which desires can be, i.e. they might be: “ill-informed,” “irrational,” “base,” “poorly cultivated,” “pointless,” “artificially aroused,” or “desires to be badly off.”<sup>541</sup> For each of these well-being as self-realization can either co-opt some of Heathwood’s insights concerning how an “actualist” desire-satisfaction theory can respond the problem of defective desires, or it can offer a more compelling response to these objections than Heathwood’s sort of approach. Accordingly, in what follows I consider each type of defective desire, how it would manifest itself as a defective value, and how an actualist approach to well-being as self-realization can respond to this problem.

To begin with, consider what an actualist desire-satisfaction theory looks like. According to Heathwood the simplest form of an actualist desire-satisfaction theory of well-being would contain the following theses:<sup>542</sup>

- (i) Every basic desire satisfaction is intrinsically good for its subject; every basic desire frustration is intrinsically bad for its subject.
- (ii) The intrinsic value for its subject of a basic desire satisfaction = the intensity of the desire satisfied; the intrinsic value for its subject of a basic desire frustration = - (the intensity of the desire frustrated).
- (iii) The intrinsic value of a life (or a segment of a life) for the one who lives it (in other words, the total amount of welfare in the life (or life segment)) = the sum of the intrinsic values of all the basic desire satisfactions and frustrations contained therein.

Heathwood adds a few qualifications to this approach.<sup>543</sup> First, he stipulates (as I mentioned above) that his theory is *actualist* as opposed to *idealist*. Second, it is “summative” rather than “global” in that “it implies that the amount of welfare in a life is obtained by summing over all the satisfaction in the life, not just the satisfaction

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<sup>540</sup> I.e. it is bad for an individual.

<sup>541</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 488.

<sup>542</sup> Heathwood, 2005, p. 489.

<sup>543</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 490.

of one's "global desires."<sup>544</sup> Third, it is a "satisfaction" rather than an "object" version of the desire theory in that it is the satisfaction rather than the objects of desire that are intrinsically good or bad for a subject.<sup>545</sup> Finally, his theory requires *concurrency* so that "in order for a state of affairs to count as a genuine instance of desire satisfaction, the state of affairs desired must obtain *at the same time* that it is desired to obtain."<sup>546</sup>

With the preceding formulation and stipulations in hand Heathwood offers the general form of the argument from defective desires:<sup>547</sup>

- (1) There are defective desires: desires whose satisfaction does not make their subject better off.
- (2) But if the actualist desire-satisfaction theory is true, then there are no defective desires.
- (3) Therefore, the actualist desire-satisfaction theory is not true.

Before moving onto the specific types of defective desires, I want to interpret the preceding actualist formulation of both a desire-satisfaction theory and the argument from defective desires into terms as they apply to well-being as self-realization. First, a simple formulation of well-being as self-realization contains the following theses:

- (i) Every realization of an individual's values is intrinsically good for that person; every frustration of an individual's self-realization is intrinsically bad for that person.
- (ii) The intrinsic value for its subject of the realization of that person's values = the centrality of that value to that individual's identity *qua* person (i.e. its place in his evaluative makeup); the intrinsic value for its subject of a value frustration = - (the centrality of the value to the individual's identity)
- (iii) The intrinsic value of a life (or segment of a life) for the one who lives it = the sums of the all the value realizations and frustrations contained therein.

The general form of "the argument from defective values" would take the following form:

- (1) There are defective values; values whose realization does not make their subject better off.
- (2) But if an actualist well-being as self-realization theory is true, then there are no defective values.

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<sup>544</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 490.

<sup>545</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 490.

<sup>546</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 490.

<sup>547</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 490.

- (3) Therefore, an actualist well-being as self-realization theory of well-being is not true.

As Heathwood notes, the preceding sorts of defective desires lend themselves to arguments against actualist desire-satisfaction theories of three sorts: (i) arguments from “all-things-considered defective” desires, (ii) arguments from “intrinsically defective” desires, and (iii) and desires for one to be badly off. He begins by considering “all-things-defective” desires and arguing that any comprehensive theory of well-being is going to have to give an account of what it is for something to be intrinsically bad for one. Accordingly, he offers the following theoretically-neutral conception of “intrinsically bad”: “a state of affairs *p* is *intrinsically bad* for someone *S* iff given two lives exactly alike except with respect to *p*, the *p*-life is worse for *S* than the not-*p*-life.”<sup>548</sup> Besides this, things can be bad for a person not because they are bad in themselves, but because of what they lead to. Lonnie’s desire for a glass of milk on a hot day is a perfect example of this. This desire is not bad in and of itself, but because of what it leads to, i.e. it worsens Lonnie’s dehydration and discomfort. Heathwood describes desires that are bad in this way as being “*all-things-considered*” bad for a person. Put more technically, this is the idea that “a state of affairs *p* is all-things-considered bad for someone *S* iff the life *S* would lead if *p* were to obtain is worse for *S* than the life *S* would lead if *p* were not to obtain.”<sup>549</sup> This allows Heathwood to maintain that despite the fact that he is committed to its being the case that all desire satisfactions are good for their subject, he can also maintain that some desire-satisfactions are *all-things-considered* bad. Some desire’s satisfaction, might for example, over the long-term lead to more desire frustrations whose prudential disvalue outweighs their own satisfaction’s value.

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<sup>548</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 491.

<sup>549</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 491.

Well-being as self-realization can modify and adopt the preceding argument in the following way. Again, consider Lonnie. Lonnie clearly values his health and physical well-being. This is manifested by, for example, the fact that he considers his being parched, desperately thirsty, etc., and having the unpleasant experiences which accompany these conditions, as providing him with reasons for action. More specifically, his valuing his health and comfort gives him reason to desire those things that he believes would assuage his thirst. Both drinking a cool glass of milk and a bottle of 7-Up would *initially* assuage Lonnie's thirst. The difference is, as Railton rightly noted, that for the milk this effect would be short-lived<sup>550</sup> whereas with the 7-Up it would not be. Put more technically, there are two possible paths that Lonnie's life might take depending upon how he quenches his thirst: L1 and L2. In L1 Lonnie drinks a cool glass of milk and in L2 he drinks a room temperature 7-Up. Again, Lonnie values his health and well-being so he wants to assuage his discomfort that he (rightly) takes as a sign that all is not well with him physically. Well-being as self-realization is able to argue that despite the fact that Lonnie does in fact realize the preceding value by drinking the cool glass of milk and that this is good for him, his realizing this value in this way is all-things-considered defective because in the long run it will frustrate the realization of this value. That is, the realization of this value through the means of drinking a cool glass of milk is all-things-considered defective because were Lonnie to do it he would be worse off than had he not realized it through this means. More technically, L2 (i.e. Lonnie's drinking a 7-Up) is all-things-considered prudentially more valuable than L1 because it more fully realizes Lonnie's valuing his physical well-being and comfort.<sup>551</sup> This is because in L1 the sickness that

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<sup>550</sup> In fact, Lonnie will ultimately feel worse as a result of having drunk the milk.

<sup>551</sup> This argument is structurally similar to the argument from ill-informed desires that Heathwood responds to in 491-492 (Heathwood, 2005). What's more, it can also avail itself of the same sort of response that Heathwood gives to another consideration. In particular he argues against the idea that

would ultimately result from Lonnie's drinking milk when he is dehydrated would frustrate both the realization of Lonnie's valuing his physical well-being and health as well as any other values whose realization is frustrated by Lonnie's continued dehydrated sickness.<sup>552</sup> Accordingly, while Lonnie's drinking a cool glass of milk as a means of realizing the value that he places on his physical well-being and comfort is *not* intrinsically defective, it *is* all-things-considered defective because it frustrates more of the realization of Lonnie's other values in the long run.

One then has "irrational" desires. As Heathwood notes, irrational desires are almost always all-things-considered defective because when such desires are satisfied a less favorable balance of desire-satisfaction over frustration would result than would result if the desire were not satisfied. Likewise, well-being as self-realization can maintain that irrational values are likewise often all-things-considered defective. The now classic example of this, one's irrationally avoiding a routine trip to the dentist, is easily diagnosed by well-being as self-realization. Imagine an individual who while he rightly disvalues pain, disvalues it to an extent that is irrational. Accordingly, when he has an appointment at the dentist that is going to require a small amount of pain, he avoids this appointment even though it would allow him to avoid serious problems in the future. Imagine, for example, that avoiding this appointment is going to prevent him from getting a procedure which would prevent a great deal of toothaches, make

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some desires are intrinsically defective, just as I believe that there are no intrinsically defective values. To this end imagine a segment of Lonnie's life that ends a few moments after he quenches his thirst through drinking a cool glass of milk and another in which he does not drink it. In the first segment Lonnie's mouth is no longer parched; he has cooled down and is no longer thirsty (for the moment at least, the long term dehydration would have been worse). In this case the realization of his value, his health/well-being, has been contributed to and he is better off than he would have been had he not drank the milk. In this scenario Lonnie is better off than had he not drank the milk, the mere fact that this action realizes his value makes him better off for that span of time. Of course, when one considers a longer span of time in which Lonnie is in rough shape because of his body's struggling to digest the milk he is worse off so that his realizing the value that he places on his comfort is all things considered defective.

<sup>552</sup> Perhaps he wanted to spend some quality time with his girlfriend later, thereby realizing the value that he places on that loving relationship.



him unable to eat a lot of the foods he likes, etc. Insofar as this individual values avoiding pain, enjoying foods of various sorts, etc., his valuing avoiding a situation in which he must go under the drill is an all-things-considered defective value.

Next, there are “artificially aroused desires.” This sort of defective desire was originally offered by Sidgwick who called such desires “Dead Sea apples” noting that “the objects of our strongest desires often come to us as ‘Dead Sea apples’, no longer wanted once they are gotten, i.e. “mere dust in ashes in the eating”” because “fruition will partly correspond to expectation, but may still fall short of it in a marked degree.”<sup>553</sup> Sidgwick’s solution to this problem, which is the same solution offered by many *idealized* desire satisfaction theories, was to require that one have full information about the objects of one’s desires so that one could learn in advance whether the objects of our desires (i.e. their satisfaction) would actually contribute to our well-being. Heathwood’s solution to this problem is to build *concurrence* into his actualist desire-satisfaction theory so that “genuine desire-satisfaction is had only when the desire remains once its object is gotten.”<sup>554</sup> Accordingly, a concurrence requirement makes it such that an individual’s getting a “Dead Sea apple” does not improve his well-being because the very reason one desires the apples (i.e. their taste) vanishes once one possess them; hence the desire for the apple is not concurrent with its satisfaction.

A concurrence requirement is a natural fit for well-being as self-realization. That is, an individual only realizes his values when he still values the valued object/state of affairs/etc. when it has been realized. Imagine, for example, an individual, Stan, who has an overly romantic and unrealistic idea of what it is like to be married. That is, he thinks that married life will be one never-ending fairy tale in

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<sup>553</sup> Sidgwick, 1907: p.110

<sup>554</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 493.

which his days are filled with happiness and joy because he is with someone he loves. In light of his valuing what he believes to be married life, Stan makes several on-line dating profiles, starts going to the gym and paying more attention to his personal grooming, and undertakes other activities which he believes are instrumental to his getting married; i.e. realizing in his life the value that he places upon getting married. Eventually he meets someone, falls in love, and gets married. Unfortunately for Stan, the reality of what married life is *actually* like sets in and, lo and behold, it is nothing like he imagined it to be. In particular, he wanted to get married so badly (because of what he imagined it would be like) that he did not really think about any long-term compatibility issues between himself and his (now) wife: she wants kids and he does not, she takes an egalitarian approach to chores around the house and he does not, etc. As a result, Stan's valuing getting married is very much a "Dead Sea apple": once he actually realizes this value he no longer values it. It turns out that what he valued was what he *imagined* married life to be like, not what marriage is actually like. Accordingly, since Stan no longer values being married once he actually realizes that value in his life its realization does not contribute to his well-being. Conversely, if Stan and his partner had been more compatible and married life turned out to be the bliss that he expected it to be (or even more of a mixed bag), then Stan would have valued it once he had it and, accordingly, it would have contributed to his well-being. In this way well-being as self-realization can (and should) build concurrence into its account of prudential value and this allows it to avoid the "Dead Sea apple" objection.

Another way in which a desire can be defective, Heathwood notes, is if it is "artificial," i.e. if an individual acquires it by means of some "artificial," i.e. autonomy undermining, process (e.g. overzealous marketing or brainwashing). He notes that in such cases "it is tempting to think that satisfying the desire is not good

for me because I don't "really want" the thing, i.e. because the desire conflicts with my "true self" or is in some way 'inauthentic.'"<sup>555</sup> I agree with this and maintain that well-being as self-realization is well equipped to capture this exact intuition: the realization of values that are "artificial" does not contribute to a person's self-realization. In particular, if one values something as the result of undue manipulation, e.g. brainwashing, then this value is not autonomous (and ought not be properly considered a value at all) and a person is not properly identified with it, say, because she is not answerable for it. Accordingly, an individual's doing anything to realize this "value" is not good for him. Imagine, for example, an individual who is brainwashed into joining a cult. Once indoctrinated he ends up valuing the cult leader and his "vision," i.e. that the leader become extremely wealthy so that he can begin to establish heaven on earth. Accordingly, in order to realize this value he gives his entire life savings to the leader and is at his beck and call for anything he needs no matter how degrading, menial, difficult, etc., it is. Because this value is the result of brainwashing (i.e. an autonomy undermining process) well-being as self-realization stipulates that it is not autonomous and, accordingly, ought not be properly considered as "value" at all and constitutive of one's identity *qua* person. In this way, well-being as self-realization can rule out those "values" that are defective in virtue of their being "artificial" as contributing to an individual's well-being.<sup>556</sup>

When it comes to "poorly cultivated," "base" or "pointless," desires or values, many theorists maintain that such desires or values are *intrinsically* defective so that

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<sup>555</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 494.

<sup>556</sup> There are several ways in which well-being as self-realization could argue that the cult member's values are not "his own" (and ought not be considered "his values" at all). First, it could offer a "historical" conception of autonomy according to which one is only autonomous in relationship to one's values if one approves of the process through which they came about. In this case one can easily imagine that the cult member might object to his values having come about through brainwashing or manipulative processes so that he is not autonomous in relation to them. In contrast, one might argue that his values are not his own because he is not "answerable" to them in the way in which one must be for one's value in order to be autonomous to them.

their satisfaction or realization does not contribute to an individual's well-being. Before examining the nature of such desires and values it is important to note that this is **not** the claim that these desires are all-things-considered defective. Heathwood, for instance, notes that "one reason that it might be true that a person has "poorly cultivated desires" is that the person has a set of desires that will lead to an overall lower balance in his life of desire satisfaction over frustration than he would have if he had some other, readily attainable set of desires."<sup>557</sup> For example, imagine two individuals: one who desires Muzak and mashed potatoes and another who desires Mozart and masterpiece cuisine. Heathwood argues that the former set of desires (mashed potatoes and Muzak) may be all-things-considered defective, not because of some intrinsic quality that they have, but because they may be less able to keep one from desiring them or the desire for them might be less intense (as is their satisfaction). Imagining that one values mashed potatoes and Muzak, well-being as self-realization can avail itself of the same sort of response. In particular, that value that one attaches to mashed potatoes might be prudentially less valuable for one than the value that one could attach to masterpiece cuisine because the latter sort of valuing might lend itself to more opportunities for self-realization, e.g. more opportunities to deepen one's appreciation of it and make involvement with it a more central part of one's identity through for example, refining one's tastes with different foods, deepening one's familiarity with different methods of food preparation, etc. This, however, is a purely contingent matter. That is, there is nothing intrinsic about mashed potatoes or masterpiece cuisine that makes them more prudentially valuable for any person (*qua* person). A person's idiosyncratic evaluative makeup might be such that he really values listening to Muzak and eating mashed potatoes and will

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<sup>557</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 494-495.

continue to do so forever while masterpiece cuisine will simply always leave him cold.

Finally one has putatively *intrinsically* defective desires. Objections to actualist desire-satisfaction theories which appeal to the existence of such desires maintain that “for some desires, a person can be made worse off by having them satisfied, not because the satisfaction leads to a lower net balance of satisfactions, but simply because their satisfaction is bad (or not very good) in itself.”<sup>558</sup> The most common example of this sort of desire is so-called “base” desires. Appeals to the putative prudential defectiveness of “base” desires goes as far back as G.E. Moore who imagined an individual who got pleasure out of, or, for current purposes desire most strongly or valued highly, being in a state of perpetual indulgence of bestiality.<sup>559</sup> In such cases an actualist desire-satisfaction or self-realization theory of well-being is committed to the view that an individual who has this desire satisfied or this value realized is enjoying a very high level of well-being. Moore, however, goes further than this and argues that in addition to this individual experiencing a high level of well-being “all human endeavors should be devoted to its [the state of affairs in which he is perpetually engaged in bestiality] realization.”<sup>560</sup> A similar (and far more recent) objection offered by Feldman<sup>561</sup> concerns base desires that are morally abhorrent. Feldman imagines a terrorist who hates children and who wants nothing more than to see them suffer. Accordingly, he devotes his life to engaging in an ongoing terror campaign and succeeds. According to an actualist desire-satisfaction theory of well-being this terrorist has a life high in prudential value. The two preceding arguments could analogously be made against putatively “base” values.

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<sup>558</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 495.

<sup>559</sup> Moore, 1993: p. 147.

<sup>560</sup> Moore, 1993: p. 147.

<sup>561</sup> Feldman, 2002: p. 39.

Accordingly, well-being as self-realization appears committed to its being the case that if an individual truly valued engaging in perpetual bestiality or blowing up small children (as a means of undermining, say, what he believes to be the corrupt society of which those children are members),<sup>562</sup> then this would be good for him. Well-being as self-realization ought to bite the bullet in either case of “base values”: it is prudentially good for the perpetual indulger to engage in bestiality and for the terrorist to successfully carry out his rampage. In either case an individual is realizing his values. This, however, by no means necessitates the further conclusion that in virtue of the fact that it would be prudentially valuable for an individual to engage in perpetual bestiality or terrorize and kill children, human endeavors should be devoted to its realization.

When Heathwood considers the argument from base desires he separates out three claims that are being made about an actualist theory of well-being:<sup>563</sup> (a) the theory entails that the scenario of perpetual indulgence so described would be very good, and in fact much better than the current state of the world; (b) we should see to it that such a scenario is actualized; (c) the people in such scenarios<sup>564</sup> are (prudentially) well off. Heathwood’s response to these claims, as is the response of my actualist well-being as self-realization theory, is that according to an actualist theory of well-being only (c) is true. Consider (a). Because well-being as self-realization is a theory of *well-being*, i.e. a theory of prudential value, it is neutral (and can remain silent) on the issue of whether a situation in which an individual (or even every individual) is engaged in perpetual bestiality is *all-things-considered* a good

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<sup>562</sup> After all, this individual is a terrorist, and aims to terrorize society. If one were worried that this makes his desire to blow up children instrumental to realizing some other value, e.g. undermining “the west,” then one can simply imagine this individual to simply be horribly morally depraved and wanting to commit evil acts for their own sake. Either way, the moral of the case, i.e. that this individual’s well-being appears contributed to by morally base actions, does not change.

<sup>563</sup> In his case, an actualist desire-satisfaction theory of well-being.

<sup>564</sup> I.e. scenarios in which their base desires are satisfied.

one.<sup>565</sup> Instead, all I am committed to is its being the case that every person in this scenario who values engaging in such activities has a high level of well-being (*qua* person). It is a further step, i.e. a step that would be called for by, for example, a welfarist normative ethical theory, to maintain that in virtue of the fact that everyone is prudentially well-off in such a scenario that the scenario is in itself good.

Relatedly, well-being as self-realization is likewise not committed to its being the case that one ought to devote all of one's efforts to the actualization of either the indulgence or (and especially) the terrorist scenario. Again, in being a theory of well-being, well-being as self-realization has no necessary implications for what individuals have *all-things-considered* most reason to do or bring about. The only implication such theories have for our behavior concerns what an individual prudentially ought to do. Accordingly, the fact that it is in the terrorist's prudential best interest to wreak havoc says *nothing* about what he, say, *morally* ought to do.<sup>566</sup> In fact, morally he ought *not* do what he has the most reason prudentially to do. Further, it is almost assuredly the case that the moral reasons we have to stop the terrorist far outweigh the prudential reasons we have to aid him in faring well. The upshot of this is that, for an actualist version of well-being as self-realization claim (b) above is false.

I am committed to its being the case that when it comes to values that are putatively "defective" because they are, say, "base," well-being as self-realization maintains that individuals who have such values and are realizing them are doing well prudentially; i.e. have a high level of well-being. This is simply in virtue of the fact that it is theoretically possible for an individual to have base values and to realize these values (without concomitant frustrations of other values). What an "argument

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<sup>565</sup> Or, otherwise put, whether it is good simpliciter.

<sup>566</sup> Or ought to do all-things-considered (e.g. morally, prudentially, etc.)

from base values” would need to do in order to undermine well-being as self-realization would be to establish that a person’s, say, valuing having sex with animals is *intrinsically prudentially* defective.<sup>567</sup> Again, well-being as self-realization can recognize that such a value might be all-things-considered defective, e.g. one’s friends and family might distance themselves from one if they find out about one’s bestiality proclivities, these activities might make one sick so that one cannot participate in other activities which one values, or one might get arrested for acting immorally so that one is thrown into prison and cannot realize any other values one might have. Importantly, even if well-being as self-realization is committed to the perpetual indulger having a high level of well-being, this says nothing about whether or not his so engaging is good *simpliciter*. The mere fact that I am committed to the indulger’s having a high level of well-being says nothing about whether his so indulging is, say, the *morally* right thing to do (it is not). Again, consider the analogous argument when it comes to base desires. Heathwood, for instance, notes that there are many standards against which one can evaluate the indulger’s life and that we are not “saying that the life of the perpetual indulger ranks high on the other scales on which we rank lives, such as the scales that measure virtue, dignity, or achievement.”<sup>568</sup> Accordingly, while the indulger may have a high level of well-being *qua* person, this does not mean that we ought not be disgusted by his behavior, think that he is pathetic in one way or another, etc. In fact, if one is inclined toward appealing to say, Kraut’s account of our well-being *qua* human, one is eminently justified in judging that the perpetual indulger has a low level of well-being *qua* human (at least according to Developmentalism’s standards). Again, as Heathwood notes for desires, “a desire can be all-things-considered defective not because it

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<sup>567</sup> Heathwood makes this same point in terms of desire (Heathwood, 2005).

<sup>568</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 497.



adversely affects one's net level of welfare, but because it adversely affects one's character, or one's dignity, or what one achieves in life, each of which corresponds to a scale of evaluation of lives that we care about."<sup>569</sup> Well-being as self-realization can offer the same judgment on the grounds that the mere fact that realizing some value would be good for a person does not force us to judge that such realization would be all-things-considered good because one might, for instance, be taking moral, perfectionist, etc., considerations into account when making such judgments. Heathwood also makes an important point when it comes to our judgments of individuals' desires that also apply to our reactions to their values. That is, despite the fact that our negative reactions, i.e. our disgust, to the perpetual indulger's values might survive reflection, what lies behind the reason that we react strongly against the life of a perpetual indulgence in bestiality is that we care about more than just welfare. We don't merely want ourselves (or those we love) to be well off; we also want (or want them) to do good things, to be good people, to achieve worthwhile things.<sup>570</sup> Accordingly, because we typically value more than, say, the mere indulgence in bestiality, we find a life dedicated to such activities to not be prudentially valuable.

Return to the terrorist for a moment. This case differs from the case of the perpetual indulger in bestiality because we do not simply find his actions to be "disgusting" but morally abhorrent. Again, I want to emphasize that well-being as self-realization is only a theory of prudential value and can agree with any normative theory that maintains that the terrorist is an awful person whose actions are morally reprehensible. That being said, insofar as the activity of blowing up children realizes one of the terrorist's values, i.e. undermining corrupt western powers, bringing

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<sup>569</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 497.

<sup>570</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 498.

attention to his cause, etc., his action is prudentially valuable for him. This does **not** mean that his actions ought to be allowed or tolerated (they should not be) or that his life is high on the other scales according to which we evaluate an individual's well-being. I am inclined to agree with Heathwood that one of the reasons that we are outraged is that "the terrorist *is* well off despite that fact that he is such a horrible person."<sup>571</sup> That is, insofar as one thinks that a person ought not benefit from immoral actions the terrorist is a paradigmatic example of an individual who does just that: he has a good life in virtue of doing horribly immoral things. For a concrete example of this, think of how outrage in the United States grew toward Osama Bin Laden as he was able to elude being captured in the many years following the attacks on September eleventh. I would offer that part of the reason that so many individuals were upset at his eluding capture was that his life was better in virtue of his being able to continue to do what he valued: to remain a thorn in the United State's side after having orchestrated the attacks on 9-11. Ultimately, the upshot of the preceding considerations is that there is no such thing as values that are intrinsically prudentially defective in virtue of their being base or immoral.

Next one has values that are allegedly intrinsically defective because they concern something that is putatively "pointless" or "worthless." Again, a classic example of this is one that I already discussed in depth earlier: Rawls' grass counter. Now, insofar as the grass counter values, on a basic level,<sup>572</sup> counting blades of grass, the charge would be that realizing such a value is prudentially worthless because it is an inherently worthless (i.e. "defective") value. Having seen the arguments I made in chapter two, one rather obvious way in which one might argue that the grass counter's activities are worthless (and hence "defective") is because they *lack excellence* and

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<sup>571</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 498.

<sup>572</sup> I.e. it is not instrumental to realizing some other value he has.

that human persons, as beings with dignity and worth, ought to pursue the excellent over the pointless.<sup>573</sup> My response to this is similar to the response I made against several objective-list theories in chapter two: a life's "excellence" is measured according to a different standard than a life's prudential value. That is, a life's excellence is typically measured according to the standard set by some species to which an individual belongs and is determined by considering whether one exercises and perfects the capacities characteristic of that class. Accordingly, while the grass counter's life may not be excellent, say, because he is not perfecting his distinctively human capacities, this says nothing about how good his life is *for him*.

The final way in which a desire or value might be intrinsically defective is if one values his being badly off. Standard examples of this typically imagine an individual who has done something morally reprehensible and as a result is guilt ridden and desires or values the state of affairs in which he is badly off. For an example of this Heathwood imagines that "guilt-ridden by past crimes, I seek to punish myself by taking an arduous, boring, and insignificant job."<sup>574</sup> Let's imagine this case more concretely and tragically: a mother, Sara, accidentally leaves her child in a hot car in the summer as she runs into a mall to run a few errands. The child dies from being left in the car and Sara, as a result, is guilt ridden. More specifically, she believes that she has done something morally abhorrent and, consequently, deserves to suffer for it. While she is not criminally charged, she feels as if she has betrayed a value she deeply held, i.e. caring for her child, so she decides that she deserves to suffer and values that suffering's coming about. Accordingly Sara stops participating in the other things she values, i.e. she lets her relationships fall apart, stops keeping up with her hobbies, and avoids situations which she knows make her happy (imagine

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<sup>573</sup> Heathwood makes a structurally analogous argument concerning desires (Heathwood, 2005: p. 499).

<sup>574</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 488 He borrows this case from Kraut (1994) *Desire and the Human Good*. Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, 68(2), p. 315.

she stops going to the sorts of movies that she knows that she finds funny). She does this because she believes that she has gross moral failings and that she ought to atone for her sins. Consequently, she *values* her suffering for her egregious moral failings. I submit that insofar as Sara values her being badly off in the scenario so described, her realizing this value is prudentially good for her. This is even more plausible if one imagines that Sara believes that she deserves to suffer for say “moral” (or perhaps even “religious” reasons, i.e. she needs to serve some sort of “penitence” for her sins) reasons. As such, her suffering (i.e. value frustrations) are tied to a part of her identity that is very fundamental to her (i.e. imagine that she is a morally fastidious or devoutly religious individual). That being said, because this situation necessarily involves Sara’s not realizing other values she has, e.g. cultivating close personal relationships, participating in her hobbies, participating in activities which provide her with happiness, her valuing being badly off is almost certainly all-things-considered defective. In fact, this sort of value is what Heathwood calls *necessarily all-things-considered defective*, i.e. “all-things-considered defective because its defectiveness is due to the frustration [of value realizations] it will lead to, but necessarily defective because it will lead to frustrations of necessity.”<sup>575</sup> That is, anytime Sara is faring poorly, and thereby realizing one of her values, she is by that very fact having her well-being contributed to. That being said, her realizing this value means that other values are *necessarily* not being realized, this, after all, is what is her faring poorly consists in (according to well-being as self-realization). Accordingly, well-being as self-realization is able to maintain that while an individual’s valuing being poorly off is *not* intrinsically defective it is all-things-considered defective and necessarily so. Any individual who values being poorly off will necessarily be faring poorly, i.e.

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<sup>575</sup> Heathwood, 2005: p. 501.

have a low level of well-being, anytime this value is realized (even though this realization, in and of itself, positively contributes to their well-being).

Ultimately then, if one wants to avoid the worries about alienation that accompany *idealized* desire-satisfaction theories of well-being one can adopt an “actualist” approach. Well-being as self-realization is sufficiently theoretically similar to desire-satisfaction theories of well-being (after all, desiring something is one mode of valuation) that their “actualist” form can be appealed to in order to see how an actualist version of well-being as self-realization approach can handle objections based upon so-called “defective” values. In particular while I maintain that there are no intrinsically *prudentially* defective values, there are many sorts of values that are all-things-considered defective, morally defective, and defective insofar as one is concerned with an individual’s well-being *qua* human. This, I maintain, is the correct result for a theory of well-being that focuses upon our well-being *qua* person and our values, that which defines our identity as such. There is, however, a problem that, like the objection based on “defective desires,” many take to be a serious problem for desire satisfaction theories: the scope problem. Again, because of well-being as self-realization’s theoretical similarity to desire-satisfaction theories, it is understandable that one might worry that it too is threatened by the scope problem. I believe, however, that it is another major theoretical virtue of well-being as self-realization that it can avoid the scope problem.

#### **4.4.0 The Nature of Valuing**

While many consider it a virtue of desire-satisfaction and attitudinal hedonist theories that they posit *one* pro-attitude as being *the* pro-attitude integral to our well-being, well-being as self-realization takes a somewhat more pluralist approach and maintains that there are many different modes of valuation and pro-attitudes

constitutive of valuing. That is, while an individual may be considered as valuing something when his volitional makeup has a particular structure to it, there are many pro-attitudes in which this valuing may be manifest. “Pluralist” approaches to valuing, i.e. approaches which recognize that there are several ways in which individuals value things, are employed by such theorists as Anderson who, for example, maintains that some of the ways in which one can value something include: use, respect, appreciation, consideration, love...honor, admiration, reverence, and toleration.<sup>576</sup> Relatedly, Scheffler offers a general account of valuing which, as he describes it, involves a fusion of reason and emotion.<sup>577</sup> More specifically Scheffler maintains that valuing “comprises a complex syndrome of interrelated dispositions and attitudes, including, at least, certain characteristic types of belief, dispositions to treat certain kinds of considerations as reasons for action, and susceptibility to a wide range of emotions.”<sup>578</sup> Slightly more schematically, Scheffler maintains that valuing X (some object, state of affairs, individual, etc.) involves at least the following elements:

1. A belief that X is good or valuable or worthy,
2. A susceptibility to experience a range of context-dependent emotions regarding X,
3. A disposition to experience these emotions as being merited or appropriate,
4. A disposition to treat certain kinds of X-related considerations as reasons for action in relevant deliberative contexts.<sup>579</sup>

I believe that Anderson and Scheffler offer a good starting point for thinking about what it is for an individual to value something. Well-being as self-realization expands upon the preceding points in maintaining that in order for an individual’s values to “be his own” he must be autonomous in relation to them. Importantly, it is different

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<sup>576</sup> Anderson, E. (1995). *Value in Ethics and Economics* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

<sup>577</sup> Scheffler, S. (2011). Valuing. In R. J. Wallace, R. Kumar, & S. Freeman (Eds.), *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T.M. Scanlon* (pp. 23–42). New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>578</sup> Scheffler, 2011: p. 28.

<sup>579</sup> Scheffler, 2011: p. 32.

from Scheffler's conception of valuing in that one can value something without necessarily believing it to be objectively valuable or "worthy."

#### 4.4.1 Goals, Values, and The Scope Problem

Desire-satisfaction theories are able to offer clear judgments and evaluations of an individual's level of well-being: an individual is faring well to the extent that his desires are satisfied. It would be a theoretically attractive feature of well-being as self-realization if it could offer similarly clear evaluative judgments. One way in which it might be able to do this is by demonstrating how it offers an account of individuals' well-being that is linked to standards of success set constitutively by the nature of valuing. I want to suggest that despite the pluralism that one finds among the various forms of valuation, ultimately one's values aim at being realized. That is, values' constitutive aim is realization. Accordingly, a person's well-being, i.e. his self-realization, is linked to the standard of success set constitutively by his values, i.e. the degree to which they are realized.

The preceding approach shares some similarities with those theories of well-being that consider an individual's well-being as consisting in the *success* of his aims or goals. Keller, one of the advocates of this view, maintains that a theory of well-being of this sort requires three things (i.e. there are three tasks it must complete): "The first is to identify attitudes that by nature set conditions for their own success and failure. The second is to forge an intuitive link between the success of those attitudes and the success of the individual who holds them, and then with the individual's best interests. The third is to say how the various standards generated by the different relevant attitudes combine to yield a measure of welfare."<sup>580</sup> Well-being as self-realization attempts to meet the preceding tasks in the following ways. First,

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<sup>580</sup> Keller, S. (2009). Welfare as Success. *Noûs*, 43(4), 656–683. p. 668.

instead of focusing on one unique pro-attitude, say, a desire or one's taking pleasure in the fact that something is the case, well-being as self-realization recognizes that there are many attitudes that it may be appropriate to take toward those things which one values. Regardless of the mode of valuation, however, I believe that the nature of valuing sets the condition for its success: our values aim at being realized. When it comes to the second task, i.e. why there is an intuitive link between an individual's values being realized and that individual's faring well, the first chapter of my dissertation, as well as subsequent chapters, have offered many arguments in favor of the view that well-being as self-realization is able to capture many of our most fundamental intuitions about well-being, i.e. the subjective intuition and our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation better than competitor theories, and that this ensures that it is a normatively adequate and authoritative theory of well-being. The third task I undertake now. I offer a structurally similar argument to Keller's "welfare as success" theory of well-being.

Keller's argument for well-being as success begins by his considering an attitude which he maintains sets conditions for its own success: belief. In particular, he maintains that whether or not an individual succeeds as a believer has a bearing on whether or not he is, in a certain respect, succeeding or doing well *qua* believer. In order to illustrate this he imagines an individual in the experience machine.<sup>581</sup> Keller evaluates this individual thusly: "No matter how good [prudentially valuable, e.g. pleasurable] his subjective experiences, there is something pathetic - tragic - about his situation. He has a full working structure of beliefs, these beliefs aim at representing the world correctly, and they fail. He is striving after something that he does not

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<sup>581</sup> This same point could apply to similar cases of false beliefs, e.g. the belief that one has genuine friends, a faithful spouse, etc.



get...He looks like a failure.”<sup>582</sup> That is, insofar as one considers this individual *qua* believer he is faring very poorly indeed. Furthermore, Keller maintains that our evaluating this individual as a failure when it comes to his beliefs does not depend upon whether this individual independently endorses the standards (i.e. aiming at truth) to which his beliefs give rise. More specifically, Keller believes that beliefs aim at the truth such that their failing to do so<sup>583</sup> makes them a failure as beliefs. Analogously, Keller argues that another attitude that generates standards for its own success and failure is the attitude of “taking something as a goal.” He maintains, “If you have a goal, then you succeed to the extent that you achieve it and fail to the extent that you do not achieve it. This stems from a constitutive fact about goals; where beliefs aim at truth, goals aim at achievement. It makes no sense to say, “This is my goal, but I do not aim to achieve it.”<sup>584</sup> While well-being as self-realization does not focus on “goals,” it does maintain that insofar as one values something, one succeeds in self-realization to the extent that one realizes one’s values in one’s life and fails to the extent that one does not realize them. Take, for example, an individual who values having a good relationship with her children. While she might have as a “goal” raising these children well, that does not capture the role that these children and her relationship to them plays in her life: she values that relationship and seeks to realize this value in her life. Relatedly, I also maintain that it makes no sense for an individual to say, “This is something I value, but I do not seek to realize that value in my life.”<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> Keller, 2009: p. 669.

<sup>583</sup> I.e. their failing to accurately describe the way things are.

<sup>584</sup> Keller, 2009: p. 669.

<sup>585</sup> One might object to this sort of case with the following sort of example. Imagine an individual who says that he or she values having money (or more money) but does not seek to earn any more money. This case seems commonplace enough and it appears to depict a situation in which an individual has a particular value but does not seek to realize that value. My response to this sort of case is to maintain that this individual may have a fleeting desires, wish, etc. for more money but does not truly value it. That is, just like there is good reason to think that one does not truly will some end unless one wills the

Another important way in which well-being as self-realization is similar to Keller's goal-based "success" model is in its maintaining that just like succeeding in our goals requires our expending effort upon them, an individual's successfully realizing one of his values in his life must be attained partly as a result of that individual's own effort.<sup>586</sup> Otherwise, it is merely a coincidence that something that an individual valued came about, an individual did nothing to realize this value in his life, it just happened. Accordingly, well-being as self-realization seeks to co-opt Keller's view that a further element of an individual's well-being involves an individual's achieving her goals through her own efforts such that if one has a goal, then one must (at least intend) to devote some effort toward fulfilling it - otherwise it would not really be a goal. Otherwise put, it is constitutive of one's having a goal that one is invested in bringing its attainment about.<sup>587</sup> I believe that some of the very same intuitions driving our thoughts about goals, i.e. it is constitutive of one's having them that one expends effort in their success, also applies to our values. That is, what it is to value something is to be invested in realizing that value in one's life and through one's efforts. Think, for example, of some paradigmatic values: an individual's doing well in his chosen career (i.e. "doing a good job"), being a member of a mutual loving relationship, or raising one's children well. All of these values require an individual to devote effort to their realization. It would be odd, for example, for an employee to say that he really values doing well at his job and yet put no effort into improving his performance or if a parent professed to value being invested in his child's upbringing, but then devoted all of his time to his hobbies.<sup>588</sup> It

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means to the end, one does not truly value something unless one has some proclivity to realize that value. I owe this insight to Harvey Siegel.

<sup>586</sup> Keller, 2009: p. 670.

<sup>587</sup> Keller, 2009: p. 670.

<sup>588</sup> There is a complication there. Imagine a workaholic who truly values being in a mutual loving relationship or playing an active role in raising his children, but is so focused on his work that he lets

seems reasonable to question whether either of these individuals *actually values* what they may profess to value. An important upshot of this is that, when an individual is realizing his values that individual is actively engaged with what he values because valuing something involves a commitment to realizing that value.

It is important to point out that I do not think that the preceding is an overly stringent account of prudential value. That is, I recognize that one might think (or worry) that “valuing” appears to be a rather robust and overly intellectualized phenomenon. As I noted earlier, however, there are many modes of valuation, some mostly cognitive, others more affective, nearly all a blend of the two. The nature of any particular mode of valuation depends on what an individual values. That is, there are a wide variety of things people value, e.g. one may highly value one’s relationship to one’s mother or spouse, pursuing a graduate degree, being happy, having a good meal, or even having a good cup of coffee every morning. Even something like “pleasant surprises” or an individual’s merely “soaking up the sun,” activities which do not appear to require any effort, are things an individual actively values to the extent that he reflects upon how nice they are, actively and autonomously seeks them out, is disposed to be answerable for them, etc. Otherwise put, despite the fact that individuals typically value a great deal of things to wildly varying degrees, any mode of valuation and self-realization involves an individual’s being engaged with that which he values.

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these relationships slide. When considering such individuals I am including to argue that it is not necessarily the case that they do not value these relationships but that it is more likely that they suffer from weakness of will when it comes to the realization of these values. They truly do want to realize them in their lives but are prevented from doing it because they are sidetracked by other activities, impulses, etc. That being the case, insofar as this happens and it prevents them from realizing these values in their lives or at least striking a meaningful balance between work and home life they are not doing as well prudentially as they could be. My thanks to Harvey Siegel for drawing my attention to these sorts of cases.

Just as Keller is, in my opinion, correct in thinking that one of the benefits of defining well-being in terms of the success of an individual's goals is that it allows him to avoid many of the counter-examples which fall under the aegis of the "scope problem," well-being as self-realization can avail itself of a similar sort of response. Again, the scope problem holds that desire-satisfaction theories make too many things good for an individual, e.g. the satisfaction of desires that will never enter an individual's experience. These are often called "irrelevant desires."<sup>589</sup> The now classic case exemplifying this is Parfit's "terminally" ill stranger case.<sup>590</sup> I meet a stranger who has what I believe to be a fatal disease. My sympathy for him is aroused and I come to desire his being cured. We never meet again, I never think about our encounter, and later, unbeknownst to me, the stranger is cured. Informed desire-satisfaction theories are putatively committed to its being the case that if my desire that the stranger be cured is fully rational, informed, vivid, etc.,<sup>591</sup> then despite the fact that after my encounter with the stranger I will never see or think of him again, the satisfaction of my desire that he be cured contributes to my well-being. Many well-being theorists balk at this conclusion, thinking that the satisfaction of a fleeting desire of mine that will never enter into my experience, i.e. an "irrelevant" desire, is outside of the *scope* of facts that contribute to my well-being. Accordingly, the scope problem arises because desire-satisfaction theories maintain that facts both *internal* to a person (his desires) and facts *external* to a person (whether or not his desires are satisfied)<sup>592</sup> are relevant to that person's well-being.

While I gestured to this beforehand, I want to make explicit the two ways in which considering persons' well-being as consisting in self-realization avoids the

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<sup>589</sup> That is, these desires are putatively irrelevant to an individual's well-being.

<sup>590</sup> Parfit, 1984: p. 494.

<sup>591</sup> I.e. properly idealized.

<sup>592</sup> I.e. the state of the world.

scope problem. First, because valuing is an activity,<sup>593</sup> i.e. a manifestation of our agency, “irrelevant desires,”<sup>594</sup> i.e. fleeting desires whose satisfaction we put no effort into and which we never think about once they have been formed, simply do not count as values. As such, their satisfaction does not contribute to a person’s self-realization<sup>595</sup> and is irrelevant to his well-being. As I mentioned earlier, the ways in which a person might realize one of his values include, for example, welcoming or receptivity,<sup>596</sup> respect, appreciation, consideration, and love.<sup>597</sup> The important point is that all of these modes of valuation, of self-realization, are activities in which one is *engaged with*, in one way or another, what one values. This engagement is evidenced by, for instance, the fact that one is susceptible to experiencing a range of context-dependent emotions regarding what one values and is disposed to treat certain kinds of X-related considerations as reasons for action in relevant deliberative contexts.<sup>598</sup> Returning to the ‘terminally’ ill stranger, while upon hearing about the stranger’s illness I might form the fleeting desire that he somehow be cured, it would stretch credulity to say that his being cured is one of my values. That is, if I *never* undertake any of the activities appropriate to the realization of some putative value, then I ought not be considered as having that as one of my values.<sup>599</sup> The upshot of this is that out of the very notions of ‘value’ and ‘valuing’ one finds a principled way of ruling out

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<sup>593</sup> Again, a person’s realizing his values is best understood as being a type of activity, i.e. it is something that one does.

<sup>594</sup> In addition to Parfit’s “‘terminally’ stranger” case, another popular example of an “irrelevant desire” is one’s desiring that there be even number of prime numbers in the universe. Like the stranger being cured, this desire is either satisfied or not without one’s having any awareness of such satisfaction or frustration.

<sup>595</sup> And their frustration does not detract from it.

<sup>596</sup> This is the sort of “openness” with which one might welcome pleasant and happy surprises.

<sup>597</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the many ways in which individuals might realize their values see Elizabeth Anderson’s *Value in Ethics and Economics* (1993).

<sup>598</sup> Scheffler, 2011: fn. 19.

<sup>599</sup> A structurally similar argument could be made against another popular example of an “irrelevant/distant desire”: an individual’s having the desire that there be peace in, say, the Middle East, yet who does nothing to bring about such peace and who is not, and never would be, in a position to meaningfully engage with the activities constitutive of bringing about such a state of affairs. In cases like these such desires ought not be considered to be one of one’s values.

irrelevant desires' relevance to our well-being and avoiding their giving rise to the scope problem.

The second reason why considering our well-being *qua* person as consisting in our self-realization avoids the scope problem is because of which facts it maintains are relevant to persons' well-being. I maintain that the limits of a person's well-being, i.e. the subset of facts that are relevant to that person's well-being, are that person's values. Again, consider my chance meeting with the "terminally" ill stranger. Even though I might form the fleeting desire that the stranger be cured, because I neither do anything to bring about his being cured, nor do I ever think about him again or become aware of his being cured, it seems counter-intuitive to maintain that the satisfaction of my desire that he be cured affects my well-being. This has led many well-being theorists to think that something can only make a difference to my level of well-being if it makes a difference to *me* so that "the facts that constitute my being well-off must be facts about me" such that changes in well-being must involve changes *in the person*.<sup>600</sup> Because the satisfaction of my desire that the stranger be cured does not involve a change in me, i.e. it never affects me or enters into my experience, it cannot cause a change in my level of well-being.

Another way of understanding the preceding argument is the following. Consider the relatively benign assertion: a theory of well-being attempts to specify in general terms the set of facts that comprise the good for an individual. If one agrees with this, then one is committed to an adequate theory of well-being explaining how the preceding subset of facts are good for (i.e. benefit) the person who is well-off.<sup>601</sup> Desire-satisfaction theories run afoul of the scope problem because "irrelevant" desires do not appear to benefit an individual. Kagan has proposed that one can avoid

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<sup>600</sup> Kagan, S. 'The Limits of Well-Being' in *Social Philosophy and Policy*, vol. 9 no. 2 (1992) pp. 169-189, 180.

<sup>601</sup> Kagan, 1992: p. 185.

this problem by maintaining that what ultimately benefits a person must involve that person's *intrinsic* properties. Since a person just is a body and a mind, changes in a person's well-being would have to involve changes in a person's body or mind. Accordingly, if something is to be of genuine (ultimate) benefit *to* a person, then it must *affect* the person; it must make a difference *in* the person, that is, it must affect the person's intrinsic properties.<sup>602</sup> Consequently, changes in a person's *relational* properties, i.e. properties concerning a person's relation to things external to him, cannot be of ultimate value *for* that person. This, however, is exactly the sort of property that is affected in the case of the "terminally" ill stranger and in other cases concerning "irrelevant" or "distant" desires. By ruling out the relevance of such properties to a person's well-being, well-being as self-realization avoids the scope problem.

#### **4.5 Well-Being and Self-Sacrifice**

Besides the scope problem, another serious problem which desire-satisfaction theories face is "the argument from self-sacrifice." The argument from self-sacrifice maintains that desire-satisfaction theories are theoretically flawed in virtue of their rendering the concept of self-sacrifice incoherent by making it logically impossible that there are ever genuine instances of self-sacrifice. Accordingly, insofar as one thinks that the concept of self-sacrifice plays an important role in our moral theories, e.g. we think it to be morally praiseworthy and admirable, if desire-satisfaction theories' make it logically impossible that such acts are possible, then this seriously undercuts their theoretical viability. I want to demonstrate why well-being as self-realization does not face this problem. That is, I argue that it is able to explain self-sacrifice and, therefore, is not susceptible to the argument from self-sacrifice.

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<sup>602</sup> Kagan, 1992: p. 186.

Contemporarily the locus classicus of the argument from self-sacrifice is in Overvold's "Self-Interest and the Concept of Self-Sacrifice."<sup>603</sup> While I delve into the details of this argument in the pages that follow, put at its broadest Overvold's argument can be summed up as the following: desire-satisfaction theories of well-being cannot explain self-sacrifice because they identify an agent's self-interest (i.e. that agent's good) with what he most wants to do all things considered (i.e. what that individual desires most strongly). Accordingly, in those cases in which what an agent's strongest desire is self-sacrificial, then desire-satisfaction theories are committed to the counter-intuitive implication that the satisfaction of self-sacrificial desires is prudentially valuable. In light of this, since Overvold's seminal piece, many other well-being theories have charged that desire-satisfaction theories cannot distinguish between selfless and selfish actions.<sup>604</sup>

In "Self-interest and the Concept of Self-sacrifice" Overvold begins his consideration of desire-satisfaction theories by considering Brandt's view of "rational action" which he (Brandt) describes as the act which an individual:

[A]ctually would perform at that time if (a) his desires and aversions at the time were what they would be if he had been fully exposed to available information, and if (b) the agent had firmly and vividly in mind, and equally at the center of attention, all those knowable facts which, if he had thought about them, would make a difference to his tendency to act, given his "cleaned-up" desires (as in (a))<sup>605</sup>

As Overvold notes, by defining an individual's good in terms of "utility," by which he means the satisfaction of that individual's desires, Brandt espouses a very broad conception of personal good. Brandt recognizes this and concedes that he considers the satisfaction of altruistic desires to be in an individual's self-interest, e.g.:

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<sup>603</sup> Overvold, M. C. (1980). Self-Interest and the Concept of Self-Sacrifice. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 10(1), 105 – 118.

<sup>604</sup> Brandt, 1982: p. 173. Griffin, 1986: p. 316 fn. 25; Darwall, S. (2004). *Welfare and Rational Care*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

<sup>605</sup> Brandt, 1982: p. 682.



...If I really desire the happiness of my daughter, or the discomfiture of my department chairman, or some cause or ideal then getting that desire satisfied - i.e., the occurrence of the event or state of affairs desired - counts as being an enhancement of my utility or welfare...to an extent corresponding to how strongly I want that outcome...<sup>606</sup>

According to Brandt then, putative<sup>607</sup> apparent cases of self-sacrifice<sup>608</sup> will actually be in a person's self-interest. That is, all that matters for a person's well-being is his "getting what he wants," i.e. having his desires satisfied.<sup>609</sup> Put more simply, an agent getting what he wants is sufficient for that agent's well-being being enhanced.

The most glaring manifestation of desire-satisfaction theories having counter-intuitive implications when it comes to altruistic desires (i.e. that their satisfaction is good for one) are those altruistic desires whose satisfaction involves the death of the agent. For an example of this Overvold imagines the following scenario:

Suppose a man wants more than anything else that his four sons attend a very expensive private college. He is not a rich man. The closest thing to a tangible asset he possesses is a huge life insurance policy. After carefully considering his options, he resolves to kill himself, making it look like an accident. He does so, and four years later he eldest son begins college. Eventually all four sons complete their education and enjoy very happy and rewarding lives<sup>610</sup>

In this case one has an individual, the father, with a particular desire, that his sons attend a very expensive private college, and the satisfaction of this desire, his killing himself so as to provide his sons with his life insurance money which will allow them to afford very expensive schools. Further, considering that he holds this desire quite strongly, its being satisfied should be a great boon to his well-being. Except that he is dead. That is, the father only has his desire satisfied once he dies and it is difficult to see how something which occurs after one no longer exists can contribute to one's well-being. As Overvold puts this point, "if we assume that the man's loss of life

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<sup>606</sup> Brandt, R. B. (1992). *Morality, Utilitarianism, and Rights*. Cambridge University Press. p. 97.

<sup>607</sup> Or even paradigmatic.

<sup>608</sup> I.e. The satisfaction of altruistic or benevolent desires.

<sup>609</sup> I.e. the occurrence of the state of affairs in which a person's desire is satisfied.

<sup>610</sup> Overvold, 1980: p. 108

constituted a grave personal loss, then it appears that on balance the man has acted contrary to his self-interest, despite the fact that his act was the act he most wanted to perform, all things considered.”<sup>611</sup> He also notes that this case can easily be reimagined such that the father does not die.<sup>612</sup> Instead, imagine that he has an insurance policy that insures him against accidental injury. Accordingly, he might seek to gravely harm himself and continue living in great pain (in order to collect the money) so that his sons can attend excellent schools. When considering these cases Overvold is careful to recognize that it is not *necessarily* impossible for such acts to be in a person’s self-interest. That is, an individual might be so wracked with guilt had he acted otherwise (i.e. not sacrificed for his children) that the altruistic desire’s satisfaction is actually better for him. That being said, without this stipulation the claim that self-sacrificial acts are in one’s best interest is implausible.

When examining self-sacrificial desires Overvold is careful to distinguish genuine acts of self-sacrifice from instances in which one is “cutting ones losses,” e.g. “a person’s having to abandon some of his business ventures to avoid losing them all, or a man who must undergo a painful operation to remain healthy.”<sup>613</sup> That is, cases of individuals “cutting their losses” involve individuals who are trying to salvage as much as they can (prudentially) from unfortunate circumstances. These are losses that one cannot avoid. In contrast to self-sacrificial acts, when an individual is cutting his losses “he seeks to minimize an inevitable loss, and thus does not voluntarily forgo a net gain he might otherwise have had.”<sup>614</sup> With the preceding considerations in mind, Overvold offers the following formulation of self-sacrifice: An act is a genuine act of self-sacrifice if and only if:

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<sup>611</sup> Overvold, 1980: p. 108.

<sup>612</sup> Thereby avoiding issues that arise concerning a well-being subject’s no longer being around in order to have his or her level of well-being affected.

<sup>613</sup> Overvold, 1980: p. 109.

<sup>614</sup> Overvold, 1980: p. 110.

- I. The loss of welfare is expected and anticipated (this is a condition on belief and not an epistemic condition).
- II. The act is voluntary, and
- III. There is at least one other alternative open to the agent at the time of the act which is such that (a) if the consequences of the alternative had been as the agent expected them to be, then the alternative would have been more in the agent's self-interest than the act he actually did perform, and (b) if the agent had chosen to perform the alternative act, then his act would have been more in his self-interest, objectively, than the act which he actually did perform.<sup>615</sup>

As Overvold notes, if one takes Brandt's account of self-interest/personal good and combines it with the preceding analysis of self-sacrifice, then it appears as if there are neither any actual cases of self-sacrifice, nor is it even possible that there could ever be cases of genuine self-sacrifice. The problem as he puts it is that "any act which satisfies the first two conditions of self-sacrifice (i.e. the loss is anticipated and the act is voluntary) would thereby satisfy Brandt's definition of "self-interest." Otherwise put, in any case in which a person has a realistic assessment of his alternatives,<sup>616</sup> the act that he actually chooses to perform will be the same as the act which he most wants to perform (all things considered), and which, according to desire-satisfaction theories, will be in his best interest. In light of this, it appears to be conceptually impossible for an individual who knows what he is doing to perform a genuine act of self-sacrifice. Again, Overvold emphasizes that this is an exceedingly counter-intuitive implication for a theory of prudential value. That is, the upshot of the preceding considerations is that it "is not simply that as a matter of fact only people who do not know what they are doing perform acts of self-sacrifice" because "if anything deserves to be called self-sacrifice, the clearest cases are those in which the agent knows full well what he is giving up, but still chooses to perform the act."<sup>617</sup> Relatedly, in order for an act to satisfy (III), an agent must knowingly reject an alternative that would have been more in his self-interest than the act he did perform.

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<sup>615</sup> Overvold, 1980: p. 113-114.

<sup>616</sup> I.e. alternative situations in which his level of well-being would be higher were he to pursue them.

<sup>617</sup> Overvold, 1980: p. 116.

No act, however, could meet this condition if one identifies, as many desire-satisfaction theories appear to, an agent's self-interest with what he desires most strongly all things considered. Overvold takes the upshot of this to be that "if we identify an agent's self-interest with what he most wants to do, all things considered, it becomes logically impossible that there ever be a genuine instance of self-sacrifice since no act can simultaneously satisfy conditions (I), (II), and (III) of self-sacrifice."<sup>618</sup>

#### 4.5.1 *What You Want and What Is Good For You*

Because well-being as self-realization is conceptually similar enough to desire-satisfaction theories it is reasonable for one to think that it is likewise threatened by the argument from self-sacrifice. That is, one might think that if well-being as self-realization identifies an individual's good with what that individual values most strongly at some particular time, then insofar as an individual's values are realized through self-sacrificial acts, such realization is in an individual's best interest.<sup>619</sup> If this were then case, then it would be quite difficult for well-being as self-realization to accommodate putative cases of self-sacrifice. Admittedly, this would undermine its theoretical viability and attractiveness. That being said, well-being as self-realization *can* leave room for "altruistic" or "self-sacrificial" acts if it recognizes an important distinction. This is a distinction that Heathwood makes in his article "Preferentism and Self-Sacrifice."<sup>620</sup> While Heathwood makes this distinction as part of a solution to the problem of self-sacrifice as it applies to desire-satisfaction theories of well-being (what he calls "preferentist" theories), well-being as self-realization is similar enough

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<sup>618</sup> Overvold, 1980: p. 117.

<sup>619</sup> I.e. contributes to that individual's well-being more so than any alternatives.

<sup>620</sup> Heathwood, C. (2011). Preferentism and self-sacrifice. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 92(1), 18–38.

to preferentist theories so that his distinction can be modified so that it can be employed by well-being as self-realization.

Heathwood argues that there are two ways in which one can formulate a desire-based theory of well-being. First, “one kind of desire-based theory determines how good an outcome would be for a person by looking to the person’s desires *about* the outcome. The best outcome for the person is the one the person wants most.”<sup>621</sup> Second, one can determine how good an outcome would be for a person by looking to “how well satisfied the desires *within* the outcome would be. The best outcome for the person is the one that best satisfies the desires she will have if it comes about.”<sup>622</sup> That is, it looks to the raw amount of desire-satisfaction within an individual’s life. Heathwood adopts the latter approach because he believes that one of its (several) theoretical virtues is that it allows preferentist theorists to avoid the argument from self-sacrifice. I believe that there is independent motivation for well-being as self-realization to opt for this sort of formulation<sup>623</sup> and that it enables it to allow room for self-sacrifice.

Heathwood elaborates upon the preceding distinction by noting that “self-sacrifice has to do with *actions* - actions are the sort of things that can be self-sacrificial” while theories of well-being “have to do with *states of affairs* - outcomes, lives, futures, other parts of lives - and their value for some subject of welfare.”<sup>624</sup> Again, an *act* is self-sacrificial if performing it makes an agent worse off than he otherwise would have been, and is in a person’s best interest just in case the life the agent would lead were he to perform it is at least as good for him as the life he would lead were he to perform any alternative to it. Heathwood sums up this idea with what

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<sup>621</sup> Heathwood: 2011: p. 20

<sup>622</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 20.

<sup>623</sup> That is, it is not simply an ad-hoc move to avoid the argument from self-sacrifice.

<sup>624</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 21.

he calls “A Principle about Welfare and Self-Sacrifice”: “An act is an act of self-sacrifice only if the act fails to be in the agent’s self-interest.”<sup>625</sup>

With the preceding considerations and distinction in mind, let us return to the father who strongly desires that his sons go to prestigious colleges. In order to satisfy this desire, i.e. enable his sons to collect on his life insurance policy and afford their education, the father kills himself and makes it look like an accident. Right before the father decides to kill himself there seem to be two<sup>626</sup> possible lives open to him:<sup>627</sup> “L1” and “L2.” In L1 the father knows that if he commits suicide, then his sons would collect the insurance money and would go on to complete their education and enjoy very happy and rewarding lives. In contrast, in L2 he does not commit suicide and instead struggles to fund his sons’ education but is unable to afford sending them to elite private colleges. Instead, his sons go to good, but not amazing colleges, and go on to lead decent enough lives, though less happy and rewarding<sup>628</sup> than if they had gone to prestigious colleges. One can also suppose that in this scenario (L2) the father would suffer from periodic spells of guilt because of his failure to send his sons to prestigious schools, though eventually he would overcome these feelings. Accordingly, he would go on to lead a long and overall satisfying life, a life well worth living by any standard, if he were to decide against suicide.

Imagine that at the time of his decision, the father knows all the facts about L1 and L2 and keeps this information vividly in mind when deciding what to do. Accordingly, if he were to choose L1 over L2 then his act appears to be a paradigmatic example of self-sacrifice: he is sacrificing a long and decent life for

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<sup>625</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 21.

<sup>626</sup> Actually, there are probably lots of options available to him; I will consider the two that most vividly demonstrate the issues under considerations.

<sup>627</sup> I borrow these cases from Heathwood, 2011: p. 23.

<sup>628</sup> Prudentially, that is.

himself and opting for a life cut short so that his sons can have better lives<sup>629</sup> than they would have had otherwise. Putatively, insofar as the father is realizing what he values most (by killing himself), it is in his best interest. Therefore one might worry that well-being as self-realization is committed to maintaining that killing himself is in the father's best interest. Ultimately then, the threat that the argument from self-sacrifice poses for well-being as self-realization is that in maintaining that an individual's well-being is to be identified with the realization of what that individual values most, it appears that self-sacrifice is *conceptually* impossible.

As Heathwood notes, subjective theories which maintain that an individual's well-being consists in the individual's preferences being satisfied traditionally "lay out before the subject the whole lives the subject might lead; then they ask the *subject* to rank the lives: Which life do *you*, dear subject, like best? This is *subjectivism par excellence*."<sup>630,631</sup> He believes, however, that a better approach would not look to see which whole life a subject has the strongest desire toward (or preference for) but "for which life is such that all of the desires the subject would have throughout that life would be best satisfied."<sup>632</sup> That is, a theory of well-being ought not simply advert to a subject's perspective at any particular point of time but look at that subject's life as a whole and ask how much preference satisfaction (e.g. desire-satisfaction or value realization) it contains. This approach to (prudentially) ranking lives "de-emphasizes how the subject feels about those lives" so that it is in a way less subjectivist.<sup>633</sup> This leads Heathwood to the following formulation of desire-satisfactionism: "one life is better for a subject than another iff it contains a greater balance of desire satisfaction

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<sup>629</sup> I.e. lives higher in prudential value.

<sup>630</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 24.

<sup>631</sup> This approach is typified, as one saw in the last chapter, by Ideal Advisor Desire Satisfaction theories of well-being.

<sup>632</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 24.

<sup>633</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 24.

over frustration than the other.”<sup>634</sup> While an individual’s evaluative perspective at anytime will be relevant to this measurement, it is by no means decisive.

Back to the argument from self-sacrifice. Overvold’s solution to this problem was restricting the desires that are relevant to one’s well-being to those which “involve oneself” or have oneself as a necessary constituent.<sup>635</sup> Such a move is problematic, as Heathwood rightly notes, because “it is counterintuitive, and also anathema to the spirit of the preferentist approach to well-being, to ignore some non-self-regarding desires, such as those for the success of one’s children or one’s team, or those having to do with one’s most cherished interests, projects, and goals.”<sup>636</sup> This charge simply amounts, in my opinion, to Overvold’s proposed solution being both ad-hoc and not capturing the subjective intuition. That is, insofar as a theory of well-being seeks to capture what individuals are like, say, by appealing to their desires or values, they must recognize the fact that they often have values which are “other focused” and whose realization contributes to their well-being.

Again, Heathwood’s Desire-Satisfactionism maintains that an act is in its agent’s best interest if and only if no alternative to it would produce a greater balance of desire satisfaction over desire frustration for the agent. Accordingly, an act can be in an agent’s best interest if it leads to the satisfaction of a large enough number of intense desires or if the alternative would lead to enough frustration. Let’s apply this the life of the suicidal father. Unless the father would be so wracked with guilt that his sons are not able to go to expensive private colleges that he would be spend the rest of his life in misery because he did not have the will to kill himself, L2 is better for him. After all, he will eventually get over his perceived failings toward his sons and he has the rest of his life to realizing other values. Likewise, well-being as self-realization is

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<sup>634</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 25.

<sup>635</sup> Overvold, 1980: p. 117 fn. 10.

<sup>636</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 25.



well-equipped to explain why the father's doing what course of action he values most strongly at some particular point is not necessarily in his overall prudential best interest. The reason for this is because of one's of well-being as self-realization's objective elements: an individual's well-being consists in the realization of that individual's values and can take as its scope that individual's entire life, not his evaluative perspective at any particular time.

Why does the sacrificial father want to kill himself? So that his sons can attend excellent colleges and lead good lives. That is, he values his son's having a certain level of success and well-being in life and he wants to see these values realized. While one could imagine that the father has this value alone (i.e. his son's going to an expensive prestigious colleges and having excellent lives), or that it is his singularly strongest value, I would argue that a far more realistic (and probable) interpretation of this case is that the father loves his sons (i.e. values them in and of themselves) and this is why he wants them to do well in life. Further, this paternal love is most likely not solely manifested in a desire to sacrifice his life for his sons' college educations. Instead, it seems more reasonable to imagine that this father is the sort of parent who is invested in his children's well-being and success in a variety of ways, e.g. perhaps he helped them with their homework, made sure they had breakfast every morning, and considered it a great joy to watch them develop and mature intellectually, emotionally, and otherwise. In fact, this might be what lies behind his willingness to sacrifice for his sons.

The strongest or most central value in the preceding case is the father's valuing his sons and his relationship to them. Insofar as the father has this value, anything that realizes it is good for him. For instance, insofar as his committing suicide realizes this value, then it is good for him. That being said, what else is good

for him is his living another forty or more years<sup>637</sup> in which he could engage in activities that would likewise realize the value he places on his sons and his relationships with them. Granted, this is not to say that his life is worse off to the extent that he fails to realize this value in some particular way; after all, if he does not kill himself he will not be able to send his sons to the expensive private colleges that he would like to and their lives will be worse off (to some extent) for it. That being said, it would stretch credulity to maintain that the value-realization frustration that this engenders outweighs the forty or more years of realizing the value of loving his sons and their having good lives that the father would lose were he to kill himself.

While I have said this at several points thus far, it is worth reiterating that well-being as self-realization is not committed to the view that an individual's evaluative perspective as any particular time decisively settles what the individual values either at that time or overall.<sup>638</sup> Take the sacrificial father. One can imagine that as he sees his sons beginning their senior year of high school the value that he places on their continuing education has a strong impact on him as he imagines (i.e. what he believes to be) their (less bright) futures if they are not able to attend *excellent* schools. It might make him think, for instance, that he simply could not live with himself if he did not kill himself and do what he thinks is best for his sons. That being said, it seems as if he is being carried away by thoughts (and fears) about the near future, and is not taking a longer perspective about all of the ways in which his being involved with and watching his sons grow and have families of their own would improve the quality of his own life. That is, he is not thinking about the overall value realization in his life as a whole. What considerations like these show is that one ought not take an individual's evaluative perspective or judgments at any particular

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<sup>637</sup> Or, however much longer his life would be assuming that he has a normal life span.

<sup>638</sup> Or even what he or she values most at some particular time, i.e. one can imagine that intense emotions or emotional distress may skew an individual's evaluative perspective.

time as authoritatively specifying what is good for that individual insofar as one is concerned with the overall level of well-being for his life. This is what opens up the conceptual room that well-being as self-realization needs in order to allow for self-sacrifice. Namely, even though the father strongly values his son's well-being, and his killing himself would help to realize that value, his doing so would be a worse outcome *for him* than were he to stay alive. This is because of the overall value realization that a longer life would afford him. Accordingly, his killing himself for his sons is a genuine instance of self-sacrifice despite its realizing one of his values.

Co-opting and modifying Heathwood's response to the argument from self-sacrifice is a natural fit with well-being as self-realization. That is, throughout the preceding chapters I have been at pains to emphasize that an individual's evaluative makeup, both at a time and overtime, is not identical with that individual's evaluative makeup at any particular time. This is what makes well-being as self-realization more "objectivist" than purely preferential theories. As Heathwood notes, "theories of welfare are supposed to deliver, among other things, verdicts about the overall welfare value of lives,"<sup>639</sup> and that the problem with preferentialist theories is that individuals have various attitudes about their lives which change over time. That is, an individual might have a positive evaluation of his life at one point but a negative one toward it at another; this gives his life conflicting welfare evaluations. In order to avoid this, preferentialist theories must relativize the overall welfare values of lives to particular times, but "just as it makes no sense to ask, say, *how long* some life was relative to some time, it makes no sense to ask *how good overall* some life was relative to some time."<sup>640</sup> A theory like Heathwood's desire-satisfactionism or my well-being as self-realization encounters no such worries because the amount of value

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<sup>639</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 29.

<sup>640</sup> Heathwood, 2011: p. 29.

realization in a life is an objective measurement. Even though an individual might value something which, at some point, is best realized through an act of genuine self-sacrifice this does not mean that such an act is in an individual's overall best interest. That is, it does not mean that such self-sacrificial acts are overall prudentially valuable. In light of this well-being as self-realization does not fall prey to the argument from self-sacrifice.

#### **4.6 A Last Word on Desires**

In summary, well-being as self-realization is superior to desire-satisfaction theories because it is able to do what they were designed to do better than them. That is, desire-satisfaction theories' primary theoretical virtue was their putative ability to avoid worries about alienation while capturing the subjective intuition. Unfortunately, as problems arise in virtue of putatively "defective" desires, desire-satisfaction theories employ various idealization conditions whose incorporation cause their theories to court serious alienation worries. Besides the problems accompanying "defective" desires, many desire-satisfaction theories face a serious threat in the "scope problem." An actualist approach to well-being as self-realization can avoid both of the preceding worries: it can capture the subjective intuition without raising worries about alienation (because it does not idealize) and in light of the nature of valuing (as opposed to mere desiring) it can avoid the scope problem. Relatedly, well-being as self-realization can make room for self-sacrifice, something many desire-satisfaction theories struggle with. Finally, in recognizing that some values will manifest themselves as desires, e.g. an individual who values enjoying beautiful weather will desire to go outside for a walk when the weather is nice, well-being as self-realization can agree with desire-satisfaction theories to an extent: sometimes

having our desires satisfied makes us better off. That is, sometimes self-realization takes the form of desire-satisfaction.

## **Chapter Five: Some Final Considerations in Favor of Well-Being as Self-Realization**

“Someday, somewhere - anywhere, unfailingly, you'll find yourself, and that, and only that, can be the happiest or bitterest hour of your life.”

- Pablo Neruda

### **5.1 A Few Loose Ends**

In this last chapter I want to do three things. First, I will compare well-being as self-realization with a (close) rival account of well-being, Daniel Haybron's "self-fulfillment" theory. Second, I elaborate on why well-being as self-realization endorses a procedural, as opposed to substantive, conception of autonomy and further explore some aspects of conception. Following this I summarize well-being as self-realization's theoretical advantages over other theories of well-being. Finally, I offer some concluding thoughts about where my project may lead our theorizing about the nature of prudential value.

Comparing Haybron's self-fulfillment theory with well-being as self-realization is worthwhile because it is a rival theory of well-being which is relevantly similar to my own, because of its focus on an individual's "self," i.e. an individual's idiosyncratic makeup, yet importantly different in virtue of its maintaining that happiness is objectively prudentially valuable. I believe that one might be attracted to his theory because just as one may have initially worried that well-being as self-realization employed an overly "rationalistic" conception of autonomy, one might likewise worry that its focus on individuals' "values" causes it offer an overly intellectualized conception of our well-being. That is, thus far the sorts of things I have offered as paradigmatic examples of things that individuals value has included close personal relationships, achievement, careers, etc. One might consider these and retort: "What about "just feeling good" or "being happy"?"

It is worth noting that there are a few ways in which well-being as self-realization could explain feeling good or being happy's prudential value. First, insofar as an individual values, in one way or another, feeling good (i.e. pleasure) and avoiding feeling bad (i.e. pain) or values being happy over being sad, it is prudentially valuable for him to have these experiences because they realize a value of his. Relatedly, it seems rather plausible to claim that all, or at least most, people value experiencing pleasure and avoiding pain and value being happy and disvalue being depressed and unhappy. That being said, I am not inclined to make the further, and more theoretically ambitious, claim that all persons, considered as such, *must* value pleasure or happiness. The more modest claim, that most persons do value experiencing pleasure and happiness and disvalue pain and depression, is on more solid footing (empirically at least). Accordingly, insofar as a person values pleasure/happiness and avoiding pain/depression either of these experiences contribute to his or her well-being. This will ensure, at the very least, that well-being as self-realization is close to being extensionally equivalent with any view that maintains that pleasure (e.g. hedonists) or happiness is objectively prudentially valuable for any individual. I would like, however, to consider Haybron's argument for the latter claim, i.e. that happiness is good for a person regardless of that person's orientation toward it, i.e. regardless of whether an individual values happiness, because while I believe that it is an intuitively attractive claim, I think that it suffers from notable theoretical problems.

## **5.2 What We Value and the "Objective" Value of Happiness**

My simply positing that happiness or pleasure contributes to an individual's well-being if and only if he values it does not, in my opinion, quite cut it. While I ultimately stand by this assertion, it stands in need of defense against what I believe to

be a very compelling argument against this view. More specifically, Haybron in a number of articles<sup>641</sup> and in his book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness*<sup>642</sup> argues that a particular conception of happiness is objectively good for an individual regardless of that individual's orientation, i.e. attitude, evaluation, etc., toward it. Haybron offers an account of well-being that he describes as a non-subjectivist eudaimonist theory of well-being which grounds well-being in the fulfillment of our "natures," specifically, in our self-fulfillment, which, he believes, consists partly in "authentic happiness." I think that Haybron's account is very philosophically rich; in particular his conception of "happiness" is one of the more nuanced and philosophically and psychologically informed in the literature on well-being. Accordingly, insofar as a theory of well-being wants to recognize happiness' prudential value, it would be well-served by drawing upon or appealing to Haybron's account. That is, insofar as one wants to capture happiness' prudential value (say, by maintaining that it is good for any individual who values it) one ought to employ Haybron's conception of happiness as the phenomenon one is trying to capture. That being said, I part company with Haybron in important ways when it comes to both whether happiness is objectively prudentially valuable and on the nature of the "self" or "person" and its role within a theory of well-being.

While Haybron's own account is non-subjectivist because he believes that happiness is prudentially valuable for an individual regardless of that individual's orientation toward his or her happiness, he is sensitive to the various intuitions that drive theorists toward subjective theories of well-being. In particular, he recognizes that one of subjective theories' main theoretical selling points is that they make an individual "sovereign" over his good such that his own priorities, e.g. his values,

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<sup>641</sup> E.g. Haybron, D. (2008). Happiness, the self and human flourishing. *Utilitas*, 20(1), 21–49.

<sup>642</sup> Haybron, D. M. (2010). *The Pursuit of Unhappiness: The Elusive Psychology of Well-Being*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.



determine what sort of life is prudentially best for him.<sup>643</sup> As Haybron rightly notes, the appeal of such views has its roots in “the plausible idea that by deferring to subject’s own judgments we respect their status as autonomous agents.”<sup>644</sup> I think that Haybron is making a mistake here that is similar to the mistake made by some of the brute-list theorists who attempt to accommodate autonomy’s importance to our well-being.<sup>645</sup> In particular, he does not appreciate the fundamental role that an individual’s possessing and exercising the capacities constitutive of autonomy plays in the constitution of an individual’s well-being. An individual’s possessing a capacity for autonomy does not merely make it such that others ought to respect his preferences, values, etc. Instead, the possession and exercise of the capacities constitutive of autonomy play an integral role in determining what is good for one *qua* person.

Finally, Haybron recognizes that while subjectivist theories of well-being do allow for some kinds of errors amongst whatever they posit as the constituents of an individual’s well-being,<sup>646</sup> i.e. they allow for some idealization conditions,<sup>647</sup> they still maintain that an individual’s well-being lies fundamentally in his or her “values.” Values as Haybron understands them are an agent’s “general sense of what matters,” which, he concedes, seem to be a particularly good candidate for what is intrinsically prudentially valuable because an individual’s desires, for example, can be “alien” to him, i.e. they might be for something an agent considers “undesirable” (e.g. a smoker’s cravings), and ought not trump that individual’s “best judgments.” As one has seen, this is exactly what well-being as self-realization maintains. Accordingly, in what follows as I contrast well-being as self-realization with Haybron’s view it is worth keeping in mind that he would consider my theory to be “subjectivist.” This is

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<sup>643</sup> Otherwise put, Haybron recognizes the intuitive appeal of the internalist and/or subjective intuitions.

<sup>644</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 22.

<sup>645</sup> See my discussions of both Fletcher and Griffin.

<sup>646</sup> E.g. pleasure, desire-satisfaction, etc.

<sup>647</sup> E.g. full information, maximal vividness, consistency, etc.

despite the fact that my theory is in quite a significant way objective: an individual's realizing his values is good for him regardless of his view toward realizing those values.

Despite the considerations in favor of subjectivist theories of well-being, Haybron argues that they have a serious theoretical shortcoming: despite initial appearances, the (prudential) value of happiness<sup>648</sup> is not easily accommodated within a subjectivist framework. Instead, he maintains that “the best account of happiness’ value requires, instead, a eudaimonistic conception of well-being” which “centers on the idea of *self-fulfillment*” which he understands as a specific form of nature-fulfillment: the fulfillment of the *self*.<sup>649</sup> The main tenet of Haybron’s view that I want to focus on is his contention that happiness, or, more specifically, “authentic happiness,”<sup>650</sup> has objective intrinsic prudential value as an aspect of self-fulfillment. He focuses on happiness because he believes that happiness bears a special relation to *the self*, i.e. to an individual’s self. More specifically, he maintains that facts about what makes us (authentically) happy partially define who we are, i.e. our selves.<sup>651</sup> Haybron attempts to provide intuitive support for his arguments for happiness’ (as self-fulfillment) *objective* prudential value by discussing two cases he offers. If he were successful in arguing that happiness is good for an individual regardless of whether that individual values happiness, then this would be a mark against my own theory of prudential value. I, however, maintain that Haybron’s cases do not demonstrate what he believes them to.

First, Haybron imagines “Henry,” an individual who, though he has a passion for model trains and the opportunity to open a hobby store dedicated to them, decides

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<sup>648</sup> A putatively “subjective” good in virtue of the fact that what makes an individual happy varies from person to person.

<sup>649</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 23.

<sup>650</sup> Here Haybron draws upon Sumner’s conception of authentic happiness.

<sup>651</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 23.

upon reflection to purchase a farm and make a life as a farmer. As Haybron describes Henry he has many reasons for this choice: “he imagines that he would be a good farmer, finds the prospect of working the land highly attractive: he sees an elemental appeal to being outdoors and getting his hands dirty, dealing with matters of human survival, and living in close contact with an independent reality...finally he desires the extra money it would bring, as it is a highly profitable venture.”<sup>652</sup> Ultimately Henry is successful in carrying out this thoroughly chosen plan of life.<sup>653</sup> Now, despite his notable success in achieving his aims, satisfying his desires, and realizing his values, Henry is deeply unhappy. That is, though he would prefer to be happy, he thinks that such matters (i.e. happiness) are a small and ultimately dispensable part of the good life. Henry does not think that life is supposed to be fun; instead, he thinks that one should spend one’s life pursuing what one believes to be a noble calling. In contrast, Henry’s friends believe that Henry has chosen the wrong line of work because despite his ideals, working on the land is not an activity that moves, inspires, or fulfills Henry. It is not that Henry hates everything he does as a farmer; again, he thinks it worthwhile and it pleases him when his crops do well. Despite this, Haybron maintains that the only time that Henry “comes alive” and that the only thing that “turns him on” is his hobby. Ultimately then, the reason that Henry pursues farming over the model train business is that he considers farming to be more worthwhile and a better choice for his life. That is, he values it more.

Haybron’s second example concerns “Claudia,” an attorney who is unhappy with her life as a lawyer but has chosen it because it is a preferred means to wealth and social status, both of which she prefers/values over happiness. While Claudia

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<sup>652</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 23.

<sup>653</sup> Which as, Haybron describes it, is consistent with what he would choose were he fully informed, reflective, and rational in the sort of minimal sense employed in informed-desire theories (Haybron, 2008: p. 24).

ultimately succeeds at amassing a great amount of wealth and luxuries, and becomes the envy of her peers, she is emotionally unfulfilled causing her to be irritable, stressed out, anxious, and mildly depressed. Further, Haybron stipulates that Claudia “could be happy with other pursuits, such as teaching or painting, which she would see as perfectly meaningful and worthwhile” but she does not pursue them because they do not bring her the riches and social prominence that she desires.<sup>654</sup> Haybron stipulates that Claudia would like to be happy, but that this does not amount to her regretting her choice and that she would not accept a life of average means and standing for any amount of happiness. Again, as with Henry, Claudia’s choice does not depend upon any errors of reasoning.

Haybron takes the cases of Henry and Claudia to demonstrate several points. First, he maintains that they have not chosen professions that “suit the kinds of people they are.” That is, there are certain ways of living that make them happy and that these comprise an important part of who they are, i.e. their nature/self, and that in choosing to live in conflict with their nature Henry and Claudia have made a mistake. Specifically, Haybron maintains that their values are misplaced; they have assigned too little importance to their happiness. Their mistake, Haybron argues, is *prudential* in that he believes that they would be *better off* if they were happy. This mistake concerns the value of happiness as an aspect of *self-fulfillment*: living in a manner that conforms to the sort of person one is, permitting the fulfillment of one’s self. Otherwise put, Haybron maintains that one (prudentially) ought not live in conflict with one’s natures, or at least that aspect of one’s self that involves happiness, without good reason (e.g. a weighty moral reason).<sup>655</sup> Importantly, he takes the upshot of

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<sup>654</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 24.

<sup>655</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 24-25.

these considerations to be that there is an important *objective* aspect to our well-being: happiness is good for one whether or not one values it or would value it.

Besides Henry and Claudia, Haybron offers several other examples of individuals who are not “living according to their nature”: an individual who chooses to live in self-imposed bondage, e.g. one who chooses a profession because of its being “respectable” as opposed to its being something he loves, a dutiful Victorian daughter who does as she is told as opposed to what she wants, or a gay man who struggles to lead a heterosexual life.<sup>656</sup> Regardless of any particular case’s details, what is essential to Haybron’s view is that the preceding individuals have a particular “self”<sup>657</sup> which they are not living in accord with. Further, his criticisms of individuals like Henry and Claudia assume that the life-style alternative(s) available to them, e.g. a model train shop or teaching art, would have made them significantly happier so that they would have been better off pursuing them. Haybron is careful to note that while one might argue that if Henry’s and Claudia’s values were sufficiently strong and deeply ingrained then perhaps they simply could not be better off doing something else, it seems unlikely that their values are like this. That is, it seems reasonable to suppose that “few people made unhappy by their way of life have such rigid and narrowly-oriented constitutions and values that they could not have been happier living in some matter other than the one of their choosing.”<sup>658</sup> Accordingly, Haybron notes that happier options would strike both Henry and Claudia as both worthwhile and meaningful. He does concede, however, that gains in happiness can fail to make an individual better off if they are in deep enough conflict with one’s

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<sup>656</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 25.

<sup>657</sup> Haybron, to his credit, realizes that the notion of the “self” is a vexing one. He does argue, however, that it seems indispensable considering that “people seem to care very much about what defines them as distinct persons” and that “it is not obvious that we can make sense of autonomy or freedom of the will without some conception of the self.” I agree.

<sup>658</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 27.

value commitments. Accordingly, his contention would not be that Henry and Claudia's values are irrelevant to their welfare; only that happiness is part of the story and that it can trump such factors (i.e. what an individual values) when they conflict.<sup>659</sup>

Before moving onto Haybron's conception of the self I want to consider the two preceding cases that he uses to garner intuitive support for his claims. First, consider Henry. As Haybron describes Henry, he actually does value being happy; after all "he would prefer to be happy, he simply does not think that happiness matters much in the grand scheme of things." Accordingly, I think that the best way to interpret Haybron's view is that he believes that Henry has improperly weighed happiness' (understood as self-fulfillment) prudential value against Henry's other values (i.e. being a farmer). This view, however, would require an account of happiness' (i.e. self-fulfillment's) objective value (i.e. its prudential "weight"); otherwise, according to what standard is Henry not giving his happiness the weight it deserves in his prudential deliberations and evaluations? The fact that this is a weighing issue is evidenced by the fact that Haybron stipulates that "it pleases him [Henry] when his crops do well" and that "though he would prefer to be happy, he thinks that such matters (i.e. happiness) are small." Henry clearly is made happy (i.e. is pleased) by some aspects of farming, and he would prefer to be happy (i.e. he recognizes its value) he just weighs it lightly against other things he values. In order to argue that Henry has made a mistake valuing what he does, i.e. that he would be better off giving more weight to his happiness (i.e. self-fulfillment) one would need an account of proper weights (e.g. happiness vs. self-realization). Haybron neither provides this account nor gestures toward how one would do so. Instead, we are left

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<sup>659</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 28.

with: Henry is making a prudential mistake in not weighing his happiness/self-fulfillment against his other values.

Claudia's case is somewhat different. Again, as Haybron describes her, Claudia "would not accept a life of average means and standing for any amount of happiness." That is, the value that she attaches to accumulating wealth and luxuries along with gaining status amongst her peers has lexical priority over any value that she assigns to happiness. In fact, she values these things so much that she cares more about their realization than than she does her physical health. There are a few ways in which Haybron must intend for us to understand Claudia's case which, I believe, undermines its intuitive appeal. First, it appears that Claudia values wealth and luxuries *for their own sake*, not because, say, she enjoys (i.e. get pleasure out of) living in a posh penthouse or desires to wear the latest fashions because she values the attention she gets or the aesthetic beauty of such pieces. Further, she seems to neither value her personal health and mental well-being nor does their detriment appear to undermine those things that she does value. This is important because if she did value these things then her valuing wealth, luxuries, and esteem would be defective to the extent that it undermined these other values (health and general physical/psychological well-being), though they might not be all-things-considered defective if she continues to value wealth and luxuries *regardless of what they do to the realization of rest of her values*. While Henry's case was relatively easy to imagine, Claudia's is less so. She seems to fetishize wealth, luxury, and esteem; i.e. things that are typically desired as means to some other end, not as desirable in and of themselves. This is why we think that there is something wrong with an individual who is a "miser,"<sup>660</sup> i.e. one who values wealth for its own sake. However, imagine

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<sup>660</sup> Or someone who is famous for being famous, e.g. Paris Hilton or Kim Kardashian.

that she does value these things for their own sake more than her health, mental well-being, and happiness. If this were the case, then I submit that realizing these values is what is prudentially most valuable for her *qua* person.<sup>661</sup> One of my primary reasons for maintaining that this is the case is that if Claudia had the sort of happiness in her life that Haybron thinks would be objectively good for her *she would be resolutely alienated from it*. That is, she would not (and possibly *could not*) identify with it; it would resolutely leave her cold. In light of this, one might justly be left wondering: in virtue of what is happiness good for her?<sup>662</sup> To the extent that Haybron maintains that happiness, as he understands it, is good for an individual regardless of that individual's orientation toward it (e.g. regardless of whether that individual values it), I submit that he offers an alienating conception of an individual's good that is not able to capture the subjective intuition. As with the other theories I have considered, this inability threatens his theory's normative adequacy. Leaving these issues to the side, I want to delve deeper into Haybron's conception of happiness and then consider what I believe to be some problematic issues with his conception of the self and its place within a theory of well-being.

### 5.2.1 *Happiness and The Self*

Despite my belief that Haybron is mistaken in maintaining that happiness is objectively good for a person, he offers what is, to my mind, one of the more nuanced, compelling, and philosophically viable conceptions of happiness thus far formulated in the philosophical literature. Accordingly, I think that his conception of happiness ought to be utilized by any theory of well-being that seeks to explain its prudential value. That is, insofar as one wants to incorporate happiness' role within "the good life" Haybron's theory ought to be utilized. In light of this, it is worth

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<sup>661</sup> I would concede, however, that such things are not good for her *qua* human.

<sup>662</sup> One might, it is worth mentioning, attempt to make the argument that it is good for her *qua* human.



considering his view of happiness in some more depth. As Haybron notes, philosophical conceptions of happiness typically divide into two sorts. First, there are hedonist theories that identify happiness with pleasure. According to these theories an individual's being happy consists in that individual's experiences being predominantly pleasant.<sup>663</sup> Second are "life satisfaction views"<sup>664</sup> which maintain that an individual's being happy consists in that individual's being satisfied with his life as a whole. Haybron criticizes hedonist understandings of happiness on the grounds that they are "psychologically superficial." Specifically, he maintains that such a view "reduces happiness to little more than the experiential aspect of a series of mental episodes" such that other aspects of our emotional conditions are left out.<sup>665</sup> When it comes to "life satisfaction," e.g. "authentic happiness," views, Haybron ultimately rejects these theories while conceding that they are correct in maintaining that a theory of well-being ought to incorporate some sort of "authenticity" requirement.

In contrast to hedonist and life-satisfaction theories of happiness, Haybron offers a conception of happiness that he calls an "emotional state theory." Put rather broadly, this theory maintains, "happiness consists in a person's overall emotional conditions" so that "to be happy is for one's emotional condition to be "sufficiently" positive."<sup>666</sup> Haybron is careful to note that "happiness" as he understands it is not merely equivalent with the acute emotion of "feeling happy." Instead, he maintains that happiness has two aspects. The first aspect concerns the centrality of certain

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<sup>663</sup> Recent philosophers who appear to accept hedonism about (psychological) happiness include, among many others, R.B. Brandt, 'A Theory of the Good and the Right and 'Fairness to Happiness,' *Social Theory & Practice* 15 (1989); Thomas Carson, 'Happiness and the Good Life,' *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 9 (1978) and 'Happiness, Contentment, and the Good Life,' *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 62 (1981); Wayne Davis, 'A Theory of Happiness,' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (1981); James Griffin, 'Is Unhappiness Morally More Important Than Happiness?,' *Philosophical Quarterly* 29 (1979) and *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance*; and T. L. S. Sprigge, *The Rational Foundations of Ethics* (New York, 1987)

<sup>664</sup> Nozick, *The Examined Life* (New York, 1989), Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*. See also, Sumner, 1996.

<sup>665</sup> Haybron, 2008: 28.

<sup>666</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 29.

affective states. Here, Haybron maintains, one must distinguish between *central* and *peripheral* affective states<sup>667</sup> because happiness, as he understands it, incorporates the former. Paradigmatic examples of central affective states includes such “deep” states as contentment, joy, anxiety, depression, moods in general, and most of the paradigmatic emotions.<sup>668</sup> Ultimately, Haybron argues that a credible emotional state theory of happiness should incorporate, in addition to central affective states, a subject’s disposition to experience certain moods rather than others, what he calls *mood propensity*. He describes mood propensities as consisting in an individual’s being characteristically disposed to respond emotionally (and perhaps in other ways) to various circumstances. Accordingly, in contrast to, for example, a hedonist understanding of pleasure, Haybron takes happiness to not merely consist in one’s being in a good mood but to consist in what he calls *psychic flourishing*.<sup>669</sup>

Haybron prefers to think of happiness as consisting in psychic flourishing because this conception has, what he calls, a certain “depth.” In particular, he maintains that changes in an individual’s emotional state, particularly that individual’s mood propensities, are “tantamount to temporary changes in personality: they alter the way we perceive things, how we evaluate things, the inferences we make, how we react (emotionally or otherwise) to events, what we desire, our physiology, and so on.”<sup>670</sup> He takes the upshot of this to be that there is an intimate link between an individual’s being happy (i.e. psychically flourishing) and that individual’s very self. In support of this he notes that a normally happy individual may react to a bout of depression by saying about how he feels “This just isn’t me; I feel like I’m not myself

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<sup>667</sup> These include physical pleasures and pains, as well as other psychologically ‘superficial’ states like mild amusement or irritation

<sup>668</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 29.

<sup>669</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 30.

<sup>670</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 30.

anymore, like a different person has taken over my body.”<sup>671</sup> While I think that Haybron is right about the nature of happiness, he makes a theoretical move that I do not think is justified. In particular, the mere fact that an affective state is “central” to one’s emotional nature, or that one has a particular mood propensity, does not mean that these aspects of oneself<sup>672</sup> are *internal* to one, at least in the sense that was discussed in chapter one for purposes of, for example, responsibility and attributability (i.e. one’s identity *qua* person). In fact, I maintain that there are some cases (rare though they may be) in which positive affective states and mood propensities would be bad for one *qua* person. Consider the following case.

Rolph is a happy and contented guy. That is, he has a lot of positive affective states and similarly positive mood propensities. Rolph is also a mid-level official in the Third Reich whose job it is to make sure that the trains run on time as they transport Jews and other individuals to the concentration camps. As the Second World War comes to an end Rolph is able to avoid capture by the allies and escapes to South America with his wife, children, and a group of other Nazi officials. Luckily for them they are able to bring along a good deal of their wealth and are able to reestablish themselves as a small secluded community. Rolph and his family are able to adjust to South America quite well: they pick up Spanish, love the warm weather, and are among many other ex-pat Germans with whom they share many interests. As the years go by, however, Rolph begins to read some of the in-depth accounts of what life was like in the concentration camps (information which he had avoided before; after all, he just made sure the trains ran on time). In light of this information he becomes consumed with remorse and regret for the part he played in the Holocaust. More specifically, he believes that his moral failings are immense and he is extremely

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<sup>671</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 31.

<sup>672</sup> Which characterize one in what Frankfurt would call “the gross and literal sense” of identification.

penitent. One result of this is that he sincerely regrets the happy and contented years he had in Germany and the good years that he has had, and continues to have, in South America. That is, he considers his happiness and his penchant toward positive moods and affective states as sinful, unwarranted, unwanted, and completely alien to how he thinks his life ought to be, deserves to be, and wishes it was.<sup>673</sup> For example, and perhaps more concretely, Rolph is regretful, horrified, and repulsed by the years of happiness, joy, and contentment he experienced while in Germany and now in South America.<sup>674</sup>

In short, Rolph's evaluative orientation toward his happiness (i.e. his positive affective states and mood propensities) is one of regret, disgust, disavowal, rejection, and alienation. Understandably, however, this does not simply or immediately change his context and surroundings: he is still surrounded by a community (e.g. friends and family) that supports, maintains, and nourishes his positive affective states and mood propensities. That is, his mood propensities and positive affective states do not simply disappear or change overnight as a result of his no longer valuing them because of his belief that they are ill-gotten spoils which are the result of his complicity in one of the worst atrocities in recent history. I submit that in this sort of case, i.e. one in which an individual's evaluative makeup is such that he does not value (and is alienated from) his positive affective states and mood propensities (i.e. his "authentic happiness"), they are not prudentially valuable for him. Well-being as self-realization can explain and justify this judgment while Haybron's eudaimonist, non-subjectivist, self-fulfillment theory appears hard pressed to do so. In particular, well-being as self-realization can recognize that Rolph no longer values and identifies with (and is

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<sup>673</sup> Imagine, for example, that he is a devout Christian and believes that only through penitence and misery will he be able to be truly forgiven.

<sup>674</sup> One might note similarities that Rolph's case shares with Sara's case earlier. While these cases are quite similar they are differentiated by the fact that Sara valued being poorly off while Rolph is alienated from his happiness (i.e. self-fulfillment).

alienated from) his positive affective states and mood propensities. In contrast, Haybron appears committed to maintaining that Rolph's positive affective states and mood propensities are *objectively* prudentially valuable for him regardless of whether or not he values them. This is despite the fact that it seems that Rolph has very good reasons for his devaluing his positive states. In light of this, I maintain that to the extent that Haybron's theory has this objective component that is divorced from an individual's evaluative makeup and perspective it is an alienating conception of an individual's good that cannot capture the subjective intuition or provide and individual with any motivating reasons. After all, insofar as one thinks that Rolph's identity is composed by those aspects of it that are most central to him, i.e. his autonomous values, his happiness is by his own lights undeserved, immoral, and not good for him. Well-being as self-realization is ideally equipped to explain why this is the case.

### 5.2.2 *The Self and Happiness*

Finally, I now turn to Haybron's conception of the self. Like myself, Haybron is not interested in questions that concern the "reidentification of individuals over time," i.e. the problem of personal identity. Instead, he is interested in those aspects of us that "are important to making us the distinct individuals we are, that are important to understanding *who* we are, and not so much *which* individuals we are."<sup>675</sup> It is this latter "thicker" conception of the self that Haybron (like myself) is interested in. He divides this substantive notion of the self into four distinct areas: "social identity,"<sup>676</sup> "personal character,"<sup>677</sup> "individual temperament,"<sup>678</sup> and self-understanding or self-

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<sup>675</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 31.

<sup>676</sup> I.e. how others see an individual or that individual's social role.

<sup>677</sup> I.e. certain morally or ethically important aspects of a person's identity.

<sup>678</sup> I.e. whether, for instance, an individual has a depressive, cheerful, extroverted, etc., temperament.

conception<sup>679</sup> which Haybron describes as an individual's "understanding of herself that is implicit in the way she sees or thinks about herself, her life, her ideals, her projects and commitments, and her relationships to society and other people."<sup>680</sup> While philosophers have treated each of these aspects of the self in depth,<sup>681</sup> Haybron, as one has seen, believes that the self has a further aspect: one's "emotional nature," i.e. one's fulfillment as a unique individual who finds happiness and fulfillment in some things rather than others.<sup>682</sup> That is, our propensities for happiness are part of *who we are*; i.e. part of the self. In contrast, he argues that there are certain ways of living that might be, for example, healthiest for one or bring one the most pleasure simply in virtue of the fact that one is human.<sup>683</sup> These ways of living, he maintains, do not affect who one is in the sense that one would not be a *different person* if, say, a sedentary life were best for one or if healthy vegetables tasted good to one. That is, such changes would not, Haybron argues, engender an "identity crisis," i.e. drastically change the person one is. He is careful to note however, that an individual's emotional nature is not set in stone. That is, he acknowledges that our propensities for happiness clearly evolve over time, that they depend heavily on social and cultural factors and on an individual's values, and that one can embark upon plans to change one's emotional makeup through, for example, certain undertakings which expose one to new experiences. Haybron maintains that the "malleability" of an individual's emotional nature is not a problem for his view because, he argues, an individual's emotional nature will constrain the options that make sense for him. What's more,

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<sup>679</sup> Haybron, 2010: p.184.

<sup>680</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 31.

<sup>681</sup> Haybron, 2010: p. 300 fn14.

<sup>682</sup> Again, he maintains that to have a certain emotional nature is to be disposed characteristically to be happy in certain circumstances and not others and that our emotional natures are partly determined by our temperaments but not wholly: our desires, values, characters and habits of thought, perhaps among other things, also have a role (Haybron, 2008: p. 32).

<sup>683</sup> He argues, for example that "it's simply my nature to be made healthier by exercise, and to find the taste of broccoli pleasant." (Haybron, 2008: p. 32)

Haybron argues that some forms of happiness and self-fulfillment, e.g. those which are the result of one's being deceived or brainwashed, do not contribute to an individual's well-being. More specifically, he asserts that such methods make self-fulfillment harder to attain because they amount to ways of corrupting or destroying the self.

The preceding considerations lead Haybron to assert that self-fulfillment consists partly in the fulfillment of our emotional natures: roughly, in our being happy. The "roughly" qualification is important because, he argues, some forms of happiness, e.g. an individual's being deceived or brainwashed, are problematical. That is, many think that individuals who achieve self-fulfillment as the result of their being deceived or brainwashed are not actually fulfilled or happy. This has led some theorists, e.g. L.W. Sumner,<sup>684</sup> to propose that well-being ought to be considered as consisting in *authentic happiness*: one's being well-enough informed and autonomous in one's happiness.<sup>685</sup> Sumner offers a "life-satisfaction" theory of well-being according to which an individual's well-being consists in that individual having an all-around favorable attitude toward his or her life. He stipulates, however, that in cases involving deception or manipulation (i.e. autonomy undermining conditions) an individual's responses (e.g. endorsements) to the conditions of his life are *not his own*. That is, such an individual's happiness is not autonomous.

Haybron is attracted to Sumner's conception of authentic happiness, though he substitutes his own emotional state conception of happiness for Sumner's life-satisfaction account, in part because he agrees that well-being has other aspects to it even when happiness remains central (though I have tried in the preceding pages to undermine this claim). In particular, he endorses the idea that self-fulfillment requires

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<sup>684</sup> L.W. Sumner, 1996.

<sup>685</sup> L.W. Sumner focuses on this issue in chapter six of *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, "Welfare and Happiness".

authenticity and autonomy in that one's happiness cannot be based on values that are manipulated or otherwise non-autonomous. Relatedly, the activities that ground one's happiness should likewise be autonomous: a free-thinking slave might have autonomous values, but any happiness he might achieve nonetheless seems less than fully authentic if it is grounded in activities that are not autonomous. Such an individual's happiness, Haybron argues, reflects a life that is not really his own.<sup>686</sup> Ultimately then, Haybron believes that self-fulfillment requires "authenticity" so that in order for something to contribute to an individual's well-being it cannot be based on values that are manipulated or otherwise non-autonomous or grounded in activities that are not autonomous, and requires "proper functioning." Accordingly, one is not well-off (i.e. experiencing a high level of well-being) simply because he is, say, a *soma* eater.<sup>687</sup> In light of the preceding considerations, Haybron maintains that authentic happiness has "intrinsic prudential value as an aspect of self-fulfillment, which in turn constitutes at least part of well-being."<sup>688</sup> An upshot of this is that an individual's self-fulfillment is manifestly incompatible with that individual's lacking autonomy and authenticity.

Finally, Haybron argues that authenticity has a further dimension beyond information and autonomy requirements: *richness*. Succinctly, he argues that "the authenticity of one's happiness increases, other things being equal, to the extent that it is grounded in richer, more complex ways of living"<sup>689</sup> because such ways of living more fully express one's nature. He notes, for example, that while a person might be happy leading what he calls the "impoverished" life of Rawls' grass-counter, and that while such a life (and the happiness therein) may be autonomous, "there is not much

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<sup>686</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 33.

<sup>687</sup> Haybron, 2010: p. 186. Also, see fn. 25 on page 19. He borrows the *soma* example from Huxley's *Brave New World*.

<sup>688</sup> Haybron, 2010: p. 187.

<sup>689</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 34.



of *him* in such a way of life, for he isn't really doing much of anything - indeed his happiness reflects a stunted version of himself."<sup>690</sup> A more authentic life, Haybron maintains, that is, a life more fully expressing *his* nature, i.e. his individuality, which would have this individual "fully engaged in the business of living, with all the richness of an ordinary life" and that the resulting happiness of such a life would be more authentic as well.

I do not believe that Haybron's theory possess the conceptual tools necessary to offer the preceding analysis of Rawls' grass counter's well-being. In particular, insofar as the grass counter's idiosyncratic makeup is such that he desires, values, gets authentic happiness out of, etc., counting blades of grass all day, this is what he gets fulfillment out of and is good for him. This *is* his nature. To argue otherwise, i.e. to argue or judge that Rawls' grass counter is a "stunted version of himself" or that he is not "fully engaged in the business of living, with all the richness of ordinary life," *requires* that one have an external standard (i.e. not an appeal to the grass counter's idiosyncratic makeup) which one can measure him up against. This, as one has seen, is the approach taken by those objective theories that appeal to our nature *qua* human. By appealing to substantive accounts of what the well-being of a particular class consists in these theories are able to compare a particular individual's well-being against the standard set by the class to which they belong in order to determine, for example, whether that individual is a deprived or stunted member of that class. Haybron, however, neither provides nor relies upon such an account. Accordingly, he simply does not have the conceptual tools needed to make the sorts of evaluations of Rawls' grass counter (or cases like it) that he does.

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<sup>690</sup> Haybron, 2008: p. 34.

Leaving the preceding problem aside, I want to return to Haybron's consideration of "authenticity." In particular, Haybron's sensitivity to authenticity considerations leads him to refine his conception of an individual's "emotional nature" arguing that: "to have an emotional nature is to be disposed characteristically to be authentically happy in certain circumstance and not in others."<sup>691</sup> This in turn leads to Haybron's central claim about well-being: that it consists partly in authentic happiness, i.e. in "emotional nature-fulfillment," and that authentic happiness has intrinsic prudential value as an aspect of self-fulfillment, which in turn constitutes at least part of our well-being. Again, Haybron maintains that happiness is objectively prudentially valuable in that it benefits an individual whether or not that individual wants/desires/values or would want/desire/value it after appropriate reflection.

I believe that there is a tension in Haybron's view in virtue of his maintaining that a person's experiencing self-fulfillment well-being is incompatible with that individual's lacking autonomy. On the one hand, Haybron holds that autonomy is a necessary condition of personhood in that a lack of autonomy compromises the existence of a person, i.e. a self, to be fulfilled. Accordingly, *self*-fulfillment well-being is manifestly incompatible with one's lacking autonomy.<sup>692</sup> On the other hand, Haybron relegates the self/person often identified with, or constituted by, exercises of one's autonomy<sup>693</sup> or one's autonomous makeup to merely one dimension of the self among several others: one's self-concept or self-understanding.<sup>694</sup> His reason for doing this is clear: he believes that a focus on autonomy has unduly dominated philosophical accounts on the nature of the self thereby overly intellectualizing them

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<sup>691</sup> Haybron, 2008: 12.

<sup>692</sup> Haybron, 2010: p. 86, 191

<sup>693</sup> Or the capacities constitutive of personhood.

<sup>694</sup> Haybron, 2010: p. 184.

and ignoring the affective and emotional dimensions of well-being.<sup>695</sup> As I hope to have shown, however, one can focus upon an individual's values (i.e. those aspects of an individual's idiosyncratic makeup in relation to which he is autonomous) and the cognitive and affective nature of the activity of valuing in defining the constituents of an individual's well-being. This approach does not ignore the affective and emotional dimensions of well-being, but it does put them in their proper place in relation to an individual's identity *qua* person.

Despite his regulating one's "self-concept" to one dimension of the self amongst several others, Haybron's acknowledging its importance demonstrates his belief that a comprehensive account of well-being would most likely need to incorporate goods other than happiness so that "it is highly plausible that self-fulfillment will involve, not just being happy, but success as well in relation to those commitments that define who we are and lend meaning to our lives."<sup>696</sup> One cannot, however, simply regulate this aspect of the self to one aspect among several others. That is, it is not just plausible that well-being involves the sorts of commitments that one has autonomously and which are, consequently, part of one's practical identity and/or self-concept.<sup>697</sup> Instead, one's having the capacity for autonomy, which allows for these commitments in the first place, is constitutive of personhood. Consequently, in order for a theory of well-being to hold that an individual's well-being involves "those commitments that define who we are and lend meaning to our lives" it needs to hold that an individual must have the capacity to make some things more central to his identity than others. These could either be projects an individual has which he has

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<sup>695</sup> That being said, while he emphasizes the importance of our emotional nature to well-being, Haybron is careful to insist that this does not amount to an endorsement of some sort of romanticism in that one's emotional fulfillment is only part of self-fulfillment (Haybron, 2010: p. 193).

<sup>696</sup> Haybron, 2010: p. 193.

<sup>697</sup> I.e. one's identity *qua* person.

reflected upon and endorsed or parts of his idiosyncratic make-up in relation to which he is likewise autonomous, say, because he is disposed to be answerable for them.<sup>698</sup>

In conclusion, while Haybron provides one with an excellent account of how one ought to conceptualize “happiness” insofar as one wants to explain or capture its prudential value, this phenomenon is not *necessarily* central or a necessary constituent part to our well-being *qua* person. That is, whether or not happiness understood thusly contributes to an individual’s well-being depends upon what that individual is like, i.e. what that individual values (namely whether or not that individual values being happy). That being said, it seems reasonable to suppose that most every person is constituted such that they value the phenomenon that Haybron so aptly defines. In light of this I believe that at the end of the day our theories would most likely be almost extensionally equivalent, i.e. we would offer similar evaluations of individuals’ well-being. That does not change, however, the fact that I disagree with him in thinking that happiness is *objectively* prudentially valuable. There are individuals, e.g. Rolph, who do not value such happiness and who, there is reason to think, are worse off prudentially for having such happiness in their lives. That is, happiness is not prudentially valuable for one *merely in virtue of one’s being a person*. Some people might not want to be happy and further, being happy might not be good for them.

### **5.3 Final Thoughts on The Conception of Autonomy at the Heart of Our Well-Being**

As we saw in the preceding chapter, cases of self-sacrifice presented a challenge to well-being as self-realization (which I hope to have overcome to at least some degree) because they involved scenarios in which the realization of what an

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<sup>698</sup> So that he is not merely passive in relation to them so that they are part of his self-concept.

individual valued most strongly at some particular time came at a putative cost to his overall well-being. One way in which one can understand the argument from self-sacrifice is that it points to a way in which values may be putatively prudentially “defective,” if, say, the realization of that value clearly leaves an individual worse off. While this concerns the *content* of one’s values and their relationship to one’s level of well-being, one might also think that values could be defective because they are not autonomous in one way or another, e.g. they might be the result of manipulation<sup>699</sup> or one’s being unduly deferential to another. One might challenge that such values are “not truly one’s own,” i.e. they are not autonomous and perhaps ought not be properly identified with one at all (*qua* person).<sup>700</sup> Accordingly, one might think that just like self-sacrificial values, the realization of values that are the result of manipulation, coercion, or undue (i.e. “deep”) deference to another<sup>701</sup> may likewise not contribute to an individual’s well-being.

As we have seen, the two predominant models of personal autonomy, *procedural* and *substantive* accounts, both offer accounts which seek to rule out the preceding putatively non-autonomous values as “truly one’s own.” Again, procedural accounts emphasize *procedural* independence; i.e. they maintain that one’s identifying with or valuing something is autonomous when it is not manipulated by outside sources. I have maintained that such theories are attractive within the context of theories of well-being because they are by design neutral with respect to the content of an autonomous agent’s desires, preferences, and values, imposing *formal* rather than *substantive* constraints on autonomous choice and actions, e.g. valuation. This allows them to respect our intuitions about the subjective intuition and alienation. That being said, as we saw earlier, these accounts have been criticized on

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<sup>699</sup> Or some other autonomy-undermining process.

<sup>700</sup> This might even challenge their very status as values.

<sup>701</sup> Or is the result of some other allegedly autonomy undermining process.

the grounds that they ignore both the role that our social embeddedness (e.g. our close personal relationships) plays in the development of our autonomy and the fact that individuals' values are shaped and formed in the presence of social forces. They have also come under attack, often by feminist critics, because there appear to be several sorts of cases in which individuals rationally and reflectively endorse certain life situations and values, e.g. selflessness, servitude, or deference, which are putatively not autonomous in virtue of their being self-abnegating or overly deferential. Mariana Oshana, for example, argues that procedural views, e.g. Frankfurtian "hierarchical" models, appear committed to the view that subservient individuals, e.g. voluntary slaves or other self-subordinating characters, can count as autonomous as long as they endorse their own subservience in an adequately reflective manner. Oshana maintains that such judgments are unacceptable because a person's being a slave or likewise subordinate robs her or her power to "determine how she shall live"<sup>702</sup> even if the constraints under which she lives are self-chosen and authentically her own. In response to worries of this sort Oshana offers an "externalist" (and substantive) conception of autonomy according to which whether or not an individual's values are autonomous is a matter of both "what goes on in an individual's head" but also "what goes on in the world around her."<sup>703</sup> Accordingly, Oshana maintains that in order to be an autonomous agent "an agent must (among other things) enjoy a significant range of viable options and retain authority over her social circumstances. Relationships which violate these conditions are by definition incompatible with autonomy."<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>702</sup> Oshana, M. A. L. (1998). Personal Autonomy and Society. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 29(1), 81–102. p. 82.

<sup>703</sup> Oshana, 1998, p. 81.

<sup>704</sup> Oshana, 1998: p. 81.

The motivation behind substantive approaches is the intuition that an individual's being autonomous ought not be understood as being consistent with certain constricted or constrained life situations no matter how the person came to choose such a situation. While I agree that many relations of subordination and subservience are criticizable on both feminist and moral grounds, I do not think that a conception of autonomy should imply that an individual's realizing certain values of subordination, subservience, or deference, *which she is disposed to be answerable for* (i.e. autonomous in relation to) is not good for her. Such a commitment would rob the attribution of autonomy of any claim to value neutrality that it may otherwise carry. That is, if it is conceptually true that one is not autonomous when she freely, rationally, and without undue influence chooses to enter conditions of severely limited choice (which she is disposed to be answerable for), then the concept is reserved for only those lifestyles and values that are seen as acceptable from some particular political, evaluative, or theoretical point of view. Such a conception of autonomy would be value-laden. If there were the case, then a conception of well-being, e.g. well-being as self-realization, that relied upon this sort of substantive conception of autonomy would court worries about alienation. It would be committed to maintaining that an individual simply cannot autonomously hold certain values, and that if she does then the realization of these "values" does *not* contribute to her well-being *regardless of what she is like*. Having seen my arguments in favor of the importance (to a theory's normative adequacy and authority) of capturing the subjective intuition and avoiding worries about alienation, endorsing a value-laden substantive conception of autonomy does not seem like a viable option to pursue. That is not to say however, that well-being as self-realization cannot capture and speak to the importance of many of the psychological phenomena that motivate

substantive accounts of autonomy, e.g. the importance of caring relationships, what respect for autonomy typically looks like, etc.

### 5.3.1 *Respect, Care, Empathy, and Well-Being*

By maintaining that a person's well-being consists in the realization of his values, i.e. those aspect of his idiosyncratic makeup which he is *autonomous* in relation to, well-being as self-realization blurs the traditional line which many have drawn between "care" and "respect." For instance, in *Welfare and Rational Care*<sup>705</sup> Darwall is at pains to distinguish care and respect as two different ways in which one can value a person. Specifically, he argues that "whereas *caring* for someone involves relating to her as a being with welfare, *respecting* someone entails relating to her as a being with dignity."<sup>706</sup> Further, Darwall maintains that the concept of welfare is that of "what we should want for a being for her own sake," while dignity is "that of a nexus of normative constraints on choice and action deriving from someone or (something's) being the kind of being she (or it) is."<sup>707</sup> Ultimately then, he believes that the contrast between respect and care reaffirms the distinction between what is or seems good from someone's viewpoint and what is for his good or welfare so that "treating another's point of view as normative is a form of respect" while "taking a person's welfare as normative is a form of care."<sup>708</sup> Well-being as self-realization collapses this distinction to the extent that it maintains that an individual's evaluative makeup (including his evaluative perspective) entirely determines what his good (*qua* person) consists in. Accordingly, when one takes an individual's welfare as normative one is also taking his point of view (i.e. his evaluative makeup), which determines what is good for him, likewise as normative as a form of care. Accordingly, well-

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<sup>705</sup> Darwall, S. (2004). *Welfare and Rational Care*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

<sup>706</sup> Darwall, 2004: p. 14.

<sup>707</sup> Darwall, 2004: p. 14.

<sup>708</sup> *Welfare and Rational Care*, 15.



being as self-realization maintains that care and respect are much more closely related than Darwall posits. One can find a good deal of support for this by once again considering Slote's moral sentimentalism, especially his emphasis on the importance of empathy in determinations of what is good for an individual, an emphasis which well-being as self-realization can appreciate and respect.

Central to Slote's recent work in moral sentimentalism,<sup>709</sup> especially his formulation of care ethics, are his emphases on the notions of "empathy" and "care." While he constructs an entire normative theory that rivals deontological and consequentialist approaches, for my current purposes I am interested in how he conceives of "autonomy" and "respect" in decidedly non-Kantian sentimental terms. To begin with, while Kantians and views like Darwall's maintain that we owe people respect on the basis of their being autonomous, so that respect for individuals is respect for their autonomy, Slote reverse the order of explanation by maintaining that "Respect *is* respect for autonomy (or the capacity for autonomy)."<sup>710</sup> While he believes that a sentimental ethics based on care and empathy can give both an account of respect and a relational account of autonomy, he recognizes that as things stand "caring" is widely regarded as "focusing on human welfare or well-being" while respect "seems to invoke or involve some other (distinctive) aspect of human beings."<sup>711</sup>

As Slote rightly notes, concern for well-being and respect are often thought to clash when issues of paternalism arise, i.e. when someone acts against another

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<sup>709</sup> See: Slote, M. (2010). *Moral Sentimentalism*. Oxford University Press. Slote, M. A. (2007). *The Ethics of Care and Empathy*. Routledge. Slote, M. A. (2011). *The Impossibility of Perfection: Aristotle, Feminism, and the Complexities of Ethics*. Oxford University Press. Slote, M. A. (2013). *From Enlightenment to Receptivity: Rethinking Our Values*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>710</sup> Slote, 2010: p. 108.

<sup>711</sup> Further, as Slote notes, "I can feel compassion or concern for another person, but these feelingful motives seem focused on the other person's welfare, and respect seems, or has been thought, to involve something more than or different from any such emotion."

person's wishes "for his own good." Insofar as such intervention is objectionable, we typically describe what we object to in terms of respect; we say that the person who intervened showed a lack of respect for the person whose wishes were thwarted (i.e. a lack of respect for their autonomy). That being said, we also think that in some situations, e.g. a parent getting his child vaccinated over the child's loud protests, we do not feel the same intuitive pull toward the idea that the child is being disrespected. Slote argues that what distinguishes these two cases, i.e. what makes the paternalism justified, is *empathy*. That is, he argues that "there is a lack of empathy in cases where a putative concern for well-being is accompanied by a failure of respect."<sup>712</sup> Accordingly, he believes that respect for persons can be unpacked in terms of empathy such that "one shows respect for someone if and only if one exhibits appropriate *empathic* concern for them in one's dealings with them."<sup>713</sup> In light of this he maintains that a morality of empathic caring can be concerned with both an individual's welfare as well as requiring that one respect his autonomy.

While the preceding concerns how a sentimentalist approach can explain "respect for autonomy" such an approach can also give a compelling account of how individuals develop a capacity for autonomy<sup>714</sup> including autonomy understood as a disposition for answerability. Consider, for example, what Slote says about individuals who have "substitute success syndrome" (SSS), i.e. parents with a weak sense of self who often seek to live through (the success of) their children and have a difficult time separating their own needs from those of their children, and who, ipso facto, have difficulty empathizing with their children's individual points of view, i.e.

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<sup>712</sup> Slote, 2010: p. 110.

<sup>713</sup> Slote, 2010: p. 111.

<sup>714</sup> Or how such development might be hindered.

their needs, wishes, fears, i.e. their values.<sup>715</sup> As one might imagine, SSS parents treat their children with a notable lack of empathy, e.g. they typically impose things on their children, e.g. activities, values, etc., without any regard for that child's wishes, fears, and evaluative point of view. Now, as Slote notes, if a parent fails to respect those wishes or values (i.e. the child's independent wishes and values) or acknowledge them, then it will be difficult for the child to accept or acknowledge them as well (i.e. identify with them) and it is likely that the child will learn to submit in large part to the authority, wishes, and priorities of his parents; that is, her deference will be deep. Such a child will "be less likely than others to grow up thinking and deciding things for himself, and in that case, they will lack one kind of autonomy."<sup>716</sup> Otherwise put, by not empathizing and respecting an individual with nascent autonomy one will prevent them from possessing or exercising a capacity for autonomy in the future. For instance, in the future that individual's values will not have any basis which is not itself deferential and, accordingly, he will not be answerable for his values and will not be autonomous in relation to them.<sup>717</sup> The realization of such values will not contribute to his well-being *qua* person.

Slote offers two good examples of individuals whose disrespectful treatment<sup>718</sup> is clearly due to the lack of empathy at the heart of their treatment. This

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<sup>715</sup> I think it is fair to say that even though these children may not be adults, those who are the object of their parent's substitute success syndrome are old enough to have independent preference, desires, etc. They might, for example, might not want to take the piano or dance lessons that his or her parent signs her up for.

<sup>716</sup> Slote, 2010: p. 115.

<sup>717</sup> Related to the preceding point, and I think this is important, while Slote does not propose that one ought to understand the concept of "self-respect" in terms of "empathy toward oneself," he does offer that the conditions of self-respect may turn out to be the conditions of autonomy. More specifically, he maintains that "it is most accurate to say that self-respect involves a sense of the importance of one's own aspirations and beliefs and that autonomy, in the sense of actually deciding things for oneself, casually depends on such self-respect" (Slote, 2010: p. 115 fn. 15). While there is a way in which one can understand this as advocating for an substantive conception of autonomy which stipulates that an individual is not autonomous without a particular view of his or her value or importance, I believe, and I advocate for in what follows, the idea that one can offer a relational conception of autonomy which captures this idea while avoiding any particular idiosyncratic evaluative commitments.

<sup>718</sup> I.e. their being treated with a lack of respect for their autonomy and values.

lack of empathy disrespects these individuals, undermines their developing a capacity for autonomy (as a disposition for answerability), and compromises their level of well-being; after all they do not have the capacity to for their own values which they can realize. First, he notes that many children who are reared in religious families are strongly discouraged from questioning religious dogmas or beliefs. Second, sexist attitudes in the early twentieth century<sup>719</sup> led many parents to discourage their daughters from even considering a career in medicine. In response to these girls expressing interest in pursuing such a career they were often told that studying medicine<sup>720</sup> “is not what they *really* want” and that they “would really prefer to be a nurse.”<sup>721</sup> Otherwise, put, they were taught to not trust their own desires, values, etc., and to defer to others about what is *really* in their best interest. That is, they were conditioned to think that their values were not their “actual value” so that they ought not answer, or be answerable, for them. As Slote notes, in *In a Different Voice*<sup>722</sup> Carol Gilligan pointed out that “patriarchal societies treat many of the thoughts and aspirations of girls as if they were mistakes or involved misunderstandings on the girls parts.”<sup>723</sup> All of the preceding, e.g. lack of empathy for individuals’ evaluative perspectives (e.g. desires, values, etc.), the eroding or self-trust, etc., can lead individuals to become selfless, self-denying, and self-abnegating in their relations with others. That is, it can lead them to not position themselves as answerable for their values; i.e. to not be autonomous in relation to them. Well-being as self-realization is well-served by drawing off of Slote’s Sentimentalism which has a ready

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<sup>719</sup> This is simply one manifestation of sexist attitude at one time in one place and with one manifestation. History is rife with others.

<sup>720</sup> This same point could be made with any putatively “masculine” or male-dominated career or pursuit.

<sup>721</sup> Slote, 2010: p. 115.

<sup>722</sup> Gilligan, C. (1993). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

<sup>723</sup> Gilligan, 1993: Ch. 3.

diagnosis of how the preceding can come to happen: “selflessness and the like typically result(ed) from the disrespectful way in which some or many girls were or are treated. If it is wrong to treat people with disrespect, then the failure or refusal to listen to what girls say, or see things from their point of view, amounts to wrongdoing...and at the heart of that wrongdoing is a failure of empathy.”<sup>724</sup> There is then a failure of empathy at the heart of disrespect and this disrespect undermines an individual’s autonomy and capacity for self-realization, i.e. it undermines their ability to possess and realize autonomous values and have a high level of well-being. This further demonstrates the strong link that exists between respect and care.

### **5.3 What Well-Being as Self-Realization Offers Us**

I began offering a way in which one could divide up various theories of well-being: according to whether they sought to capture the subjective intuition and avoid worries about alienation or our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation. Subjective theories were able to capture the former but had trouble capturing the latter while objective theories did the opposite. Well-being as self-realization offers a way to capture both sets of intuitions to a greater extent than many traditional subjective and objective theories of well-being. It does this by focusing on our well-being *qua* person and understanding “persons” to be a class whose members are characterized by their possessing certain cognitive and volitional capacities including those capacities constitutive of autonomy. This view enjoys the following theoretical advantages over other popular theories of well-being. To begin with, by eschewing an appeal to our identity *qua* human and, instead, appealing to an individual’s identity *qua* person, i.e. his evaluative makeup, well-being as self-realization is able to capture

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<sup>724</sup> Slote, 2010: p. 116. That being said, Slote is careful to note that the mere fact that one has been influenced in one’s thoughts or decisions does nothing to show a lack or absence of autonomy, that is there is “a difference between taking advice and feeling impelled to do or think whatever a certain other person or institution tells you to.

the subjective intuition, avoid worries about alienation, and capture important nuances in our experience of putative deprivations, better than objective-list and Eudaimonist theories of well-being. Well-being as self-realization is superior to hedonist theories of well-being because of its focus on the importance of our capacity for autonomy and autonomous values that allows it to appreciate the fact that individual's value, and have their lives contributed to, more than merely having pleasurable experience. To maintain otherwise, as hedonists do, is to offer a conception of individuals' good that cannot capture the subjective intuition. Finally, by maintaining that an individual's well-being consists in the realization of his values, and by emphasizing that one ought to focus on an individual's *actual* values and the active role than an individual plays in the realization of these values, well-being as self-realization is able to avoid the alienation worries that idealized desire-satisfaction theories court and the "scope problem" which threatens most, if not all, desire-satisfaction theories of well-being. In closing I want to consider a different reaction that one might have to my work and a direction it might take us in our theorizing about our well-being.

#### *5.4.1 The Possible Disunity of Our Prudential Concerns*

As we have seen, thus far I have argued that well-being as self-realization is overall better able to capture our intuitions about the subjective intuition, alienation, and flourishing and deprivation than competitor theories. While I believe that this is in fact the case, there is another approach that my arguments might incline one toward. Specifically, one might challenge the assumption that *one* theory of well-being is going to be able to adequately capture all of our practical concerns, e.g. capturing the subjective intuition, avoiding worries about alienation, speaking to autonomy's importance to our well-being, and explaining and justifying our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation.

One has seen how subjective theories seem particularly well-suited to capture the subjective intuition while objective theories seem well-equipped to explain and justify our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation. This being the case, subjective theories find themselves challenged to explain (or explain away) our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation while objective theories must attempt to capture (or explain away the importance of) the subjective intuition. Perhaps what this demonstrates is that the practical concerns which have motivated our investigations into the nature of our well-being are not univocal, as typically thought, such our different practical concerns (e.g. capturing the subjective intuition or our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation) may actually be related to our identity in very different ways. That is, perhaps some of our practical concerns ought to be considered as being entirely the domain of our existence *qua* person, while others are the domain of our existence and nature *qua* human. If this were the case, then what it would show is that the practical concerns which motivate investigation into the nature of our well-being are not univocal, as is typically thought, such that each of our different practical concerns may actually be related to our identity in very different ways.

The preceding idea is similar to an argument that Shoemaker makes in his “Personal Identity and Practical Concerns.”<sup>725</sup> As Shoemaker notes, many philosophers are drawn to investigating the metaphysics of personal identity because of its presumed relation to significant prudential and ethical practices and concerns. These practices and concerns are manifest in the following sorts of *motivating*<sup>726</sup> *questions*: “What justifies my anticipation of the experiences of the person who will be seated here, in this my office chair, tomorrow morning... What justifies someone’s being legitimately held morally responsible only for *her own* actions?... What justifies

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<sup>725</sup> Shoemaker, D. W. (2007). Personal identity and practical concerns. *Mind*, 116(462), 317–357.

<sup>726</sup> “Motivating” in that they are what motivate our theoretical forays into personal identity.

someone's being legitimately compensated only for sacrifices *she herself* has undergone?"<sup>727</sup> What looks to be called for by the preceding questions is a pretty straightforward methodology: come up with the correct metaphysical criterion of personal identity, and then see what it implies for our practices. There are, Shoemaker believes, several *guiding assumptions* built into the approach, e.g. "(1) the practices and concerns referenced in our motivating questions do indeed have a rational grounding; (2) this grounding comes from, or makes essential reference to, a metaphysical account of personal identity; (3) the relevant metaphysical account will consist in a reidentification criterion, that is, it will answer the question. "What makes X at  $t_2$  identical to Y at  $t_1$ ?"<sup>728</sup> Ultimately, Shoemaker challenges (3) on the grounds that some of our motivating questions speak to a *characterization*<sup>729</sup> criterion while others speak to a *reidentification*<sup>730</sup> one. Accordingly he revises (3) to "*the relevant grounding criterion of personal identity is either a reidentification or a characterization criterion, depending on the specific motivating question asked.*"<sup>731</sup> An important upshot of this, he argues, is that it turns out to be false (or quite misleading) to have thought that all of our person-related practices and concerns were unified, such that one particular type of criterion of identity (e.g. a psychological one) would adequately address them all. That is, the disunity of our motivating questions demonstrates that different questions call for different types of criteria of personal identity.

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<sup>727</sup> Shoemaker, 2007: p. 318-319.

<sup>728</sup> Shoemaker, 2007: p. 319.

<sup>729</sup> A "characterization criterion" would give an account of identity according to which one could answer "characterization questions," e.g. "What makes some action, feature, or psychological trait that of a given person?" (See: Schechtman, M. (1996). *The Constitution of Selves* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.)

<sup>730</sup> A "reidentification criterion" would give an account of identity according to which one could answer the question "What makes X at  $t_2$  identical to Y at  $t_1$ ?"

<sup>731</sup> Shoemaker, 2007: p. 337.



The reason for my foray into the relationship between the metaphysics of personal identity and our practical concerns is my belief that something similar might be said about our prudential concerns. That is, perhaps we have erred in thinking that one theory of prudential value, say, one that focused entirely on an individual's idiosyncratic makeup (e.g. his desires, what gives him pleasure, etc. (i.e. a subjective theory)) or one that focused on the class of which an individual is a member (i.e. an objective theory), was going to provide us with *the* standard against which we could answer *all* of our motivating questions. Instead, perhaps it is the case that some of our practical concerns, e.g. capturing the subjective intuition or autonomy's importance to our well-being, are best seen as being grounded in our identity *qua* person, while others, e.g. capturing our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation, are best grounded in an account of our identity *qua* human. Further, it might even be the case that the first set of prudential concerns is grounded in an account of prudential value that is bound by a subjective/internalist/resonance constraint while the second is not.

If it turned out to be the case that there is in fact a disunity among our prudential concerns I do not believe that this would be an unwelcome result for well-being as self-realization. In fact, I would maintain that the first set of concerns, e.g. capturing the subjective intuition, autonomy's centrality to our well-being, etc., is best captured by an account of our identity *qua* person. When it comes to the second set of concerns, i.e. explaining and justifying our intuitions about flourishing and deprivation, I am inclined to think that one ought to advert to something like Kraut's Developmentalism, which, I have argued, provides one of the more compelling accounts of our well-being *qua* human than many other extant objective species-based theories of well-being. What this would demonstrate is that when it comes to the *epistemic* question of how to we determine what an individual's well-being consists in

perhaps empathy plays an important when determining what an individual values and what is good for him *qua* person, while Kraut's Developmentalism, or a theory like it can be drawn upon in order to determine what an individuals' well-being *qua* human consists in. More abstractly, however, what my work demonstrates is the need for new and interesting avenues of research. In particular, we are now pressed to answer questions like: what is the relationship between our well-being *qua* person and *qua* human, does one of these trump the other in overall evaluations of well-being, are "overall" evaluations of our well-being even possible, if there is this disunity, then what does it say about the relationship between respecting another's values and promoting his or her well-being? It is my hope that in providing what I believe to be a compelling account of our well-being *qua* person, I have done a small part in illuminating some possible answers for these questions, and ideally have given some guidance for how further inquiries into the nature of our well-being might proceed henceforth.

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