Human Flourishing versus Desire Satisfaction

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What is the good for human persons? If I am trying to lead the best possible life I could lead, not the morally best life, but the life that is best for me, what exactly am I seeking?

This phrasing of the question I will be pursuing may sound tendentious, so some explaining is needed. What is good for one person, we ordinarily suppose, can conflict with what is good for other persons and with what is required by morality. A prudent person seeks her own good efficiently; she selects the best available means to her good. If we call the value that a person seeks when she is being prudent "prudential value," then an alternative rendering of the question for this essay is "What is prudential value?". We can also say that an individual flourishes or has a life high in well-being when her life is high in prudential value. Of course these common-sense appearances that the good for an individual, the good for other persons, and the requirements of morality often are in conflict might be deceiving. For all that I have said here, the correct theory of individual good might yield the result that sacrificing oneself for the sake of other people or for the sake of a morally worthy cause can never occur, because helping others and being moral always maximize one's own good. But this would be the surprising result of a theory, not something we should presuppose at the start of inquiry. When a friend has a baby and I express a conventional wish that the child have a good life, I mean a life that is good for the child, not a life that merely helps others or merely respects the constraints of morality.

After all, a life that is altruistic and perfectly moral, we suppose, could be a life that is pure hell for the person who lives it—a succession of horrible headaches marked by no achievements or attainments of anything worthwhile and ending in agonizing death at a young age. So the question remains, what constitutes a life that is good for the person who is living it?

Some components of a good life are good because they are efficient means to getting other goods. A college education is good (among other reasons) because it usually enables the recipient to have a higher income, and high income is good because money is a means to whatever is for sale. Our concern is with the characterization of what is intrinsically good, good for its own sake, rather than as a means to other goods.[1]

In this essay I discuss the distinction between subjective and objective theories of good (that is, well-being or prudential value). I defend a type of objective theory, the Objective List account. The defense proceeds by contrasting this account with two rivals, hedonism and desire fulfillment. These terms will be explained shortly. At several points I try to draw out the difficulties in these two accounts by considering internal tensions in the theory of the good developed by John Stuart Mill, which attempts to combine the advantages of hedonism and desire fulfillment by fusion. Hedonism as I construe it is unsatisfactory for a general reason: it implies that nothing can matter prudentially to an individual except the quality of her experience, but this seems counterintuitive. The desire fulfillment account resolves this difficulty, but gives rise to others, and the accounting of the strengths and weaknesses of this account, especially in its refined form, is complex. The desire fulfillment view has the resources to resist some criticisms, but succumbs to others. The devastating force of the objections against its

main rivals is good news for the Objective List theory, but it is also subject to strong criticisms. One criticism consists in skeptical doubt that there is no uniquely rational way to determine what putative goods qualify as entries on the List. Skepticism here is a genuine worry, but not one this essay considers. But setting aside skeptical doubt, I note another criticism that threatens to be devastating. The Objective List account allows that something I get can intrinsically enhance my well-being even though I hate it, and some will find this result puzzling or worse. Mixed or composite accounts deal with this latter difficulty by stipulating that nothing can intrinsically enhance an individual's well-being unless it is both truly worthwhile and also affirmed or endorsed by that very individual. Roughly speaking, this mixed view combines the desire fulfillment theory and the Objective list theory. The essay concludes by finding grounds to resist the mixed account and to favor the pure Objective List theory.

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE THEORIES

Philosophers have debated whether good is objective or subjective. Different questions have been asked under this description. Subjective theories of human good are sometimes taken to be those that "make welfare depend *at least in part* on some mental state."[2] The intended contrast is with objective theories of well-being which make the well-being of an agent depend entirely on states of the world apart from the state of mind of the agent whose well-being is under review. This is a coherent usage, but potentially confusing. A Platonic theory which held that the good for humans is perception and understanding of the Forms counts as subjective on this usage. I would prefer to let the contrast between objective and subjective mark the contrast between (1) views which hold that claims about what is good can be correct or incorrect and that the correctness of

a claim about a person's good is determined independently of that person's volition, attitudes, and opinions and (2) views which deny this. On the revised distinction, Plato's position counts as an objective theory of the good.

Derek Parfit has distinguished three types of theories about what makes someone's life go best: (1) Hedonistic theories, according to which "what would be best for someone is what would make his life happiest," (2) Desire-Fulfillment theories, according to which it "is what, throughout his life, would best fulfill his desires," and (3) Objective List Theories, according to which, "certain things are good or bad for us, whether or not we want to have the good things, or to avoid the bad things."[3] The three theories do not exhaust the possibilities, but this is not a serious defect, because the known plausible candidates are included. The trouble with the definitions of these categories is that they do not establish the three theories as mutually exclusive and clearly counterposed. Suppose it should turn out that the Objective List contains one item, namely, happiness. In this case (1) and (3) come to the same. Suppose that the Objective List contains one item, namely, desire fulfillment. In this case (2) and (3) come to the same. With desire fulfillment as the sole entry on the list, the Objective List theory then holds that desire fulfillment is good for a person, and desire nonfulfillment bad, whether or not the person wants to have desire fulfillment or to avoid desire nonfulfillment.

We could secure the result that Parfit's three theories are mutually exclusive if we revise them as follows: The Hedonistic Theory holds that happiness, and happiness alone, is prudentially valuable for its own sake, whereas the Desire Fulfillment Theory holds that desire fulfillment, and that only that, is prudentially valuable for its own sake, and the Objective List theory holds that more than one type of thing is prudentially

valuable for its own sake. On the revised view, the essence of the Objective List Theory is that there is more than one entry on the list.

But it would be unsatisfactory to transform the Objective List theory into the Plural-Entry List theory. My main quarrel with Parfit's classification scheme is that a theory that intuitively is not an objective theory at all could qualify as a version of the Objective List theory. To see this, notice that a theory that holds that what is good for each person is definitively fixed by that very person's subjective opinions about what is good for her qualifies as an Objective List theory on Parfit's definition. We can do better by noting several claims about the nature of prudential value that play a role in classifying theories of prudential value as subjective or objective. One claim is that what is good for each person is entirely determined by that very person's evaluative perspective. Call this the claim of agent sovereignty. What I will call subjective theories affirm this claim and objective theories deny it.

But this denial is not enough by itself to render a theory objective. Rejecting the name "Objective List Theories" for the theories that Parfit characterizes under that name, Thomas Scanlon asserts that what "is essential is that these are theories according to which an assessment of a person's well-being involves a substantive judgement about what things make life better, a judgement which may conflict with that of the person whose well-being is in question."[4] Scanlon suggests the label "substantive good theories" for this class of views on the ground that they "are based on substantive claims about what goods, conditions, and opportunities make life better." But consider an Observer theory of prudential value, according to which what is good for a person is fixed by the substantive judgments of some observer as to what would make the person's life go best,

and what is good for a person must then be specified relative to some observer. If Smith observes that what would make Jones's life go best is eating corn and Black observes that what would make Jones's life go best is eating peas, then according to the Observer Theory Jones's good is eating corn, relative to observer Smith, and eating peas, relative to observer Black. The Observer Theory fits Scanlon's characterization of a substantive good theory, but not his evident intent. Rejecting subjectivism rooted in the agent's evaluative perspective and plumping for subjectivism rooted in the observer's evaluative perspective does not yield an objective theory. The denial of the claim of agent sovereignty does not suffice to characterize an objective theory for the same reason. So let us add to the denial of agent sovereignty the assertion that there is a fact of the matter as to what is prudentially valuable for a person, so that claims about what types of things are prudentially valuable are true or false, so can be mistaken, and no person's actual evaluative perspective necessarily fixes what is genuinely prudentially valuable. Call this the claim of realism about prudential value.

The Objective List Theory of what makes someone's life go best as I will construe it is a complex animal. A theory of this type is one that denies the claim of agent sovereignty, asserts the claim of realism about prudential value (which includes the former denial), and asserts that there exists a plurality of types of good. Note that an Objective List Theory so understood does not deny that an individual's attitudes may partly determine what is prudentially valuable for her. An individual's attitudes do not determine what items properly belong on her Objective List, but among the items that appear, some may include requirements concerning her attitudes and opinions. For example, an Objective List view might well hold that one good thing for an individual is

that her important life aims be satisfied, with importance determined by her own subjective ranking of her aims.

SUBJECTIVITY AND RELATIVITY

Subjective theories gain an unmerited halo of plausibility from the suspicion that standards of well-being cannot be the same across the class of human persons but are relative to the individual whose good is in question. But the good can be objective even though relative to each individual. A glance at J. S. Mill's writings on the good confirms this point.

One of the more puzzling features of J.S. Mill's analyses of human good in *Utilitarianism* and in *On Liberty* is that the two accounts are opposed on a significant point.[5] In *Utilitarianism* Mill asserts that human good is to be equated to happiness, that happiness is pleasure and absence of pain, and that the quality of one pleasure as compared to another is determined by the preference of experienced and competent judges for one over the other. It is obvious that Mill aims to avoid the result that the welfare an individual gains from some putative good is determined by her own perhaps idiosyncratic or confused appraisal of her experience of the good. To achieve this end, Mill proposes an analysis with the feature, which some will find peculiar, that the value of the pleasure I get from eating a peach, compared to the value I get from a pear, is determined not by my own experience of the peach and pear but by the preferences and judgments of a panel of fruit-tasting experts who sample each fruit.

In *On Liberty* Mill follows a quite different line. Arguing against paternalistic restriction of individual liberty in self-regarding matters, Mill observes that what is good for each of us is set by our individual nature, which is nontransparent, and which may

differ from person to person. The conventional judgments in a society about what ways of life are worthwhile may give untrustworthy guidance for a given particular individual for several reasons. The conventional judgments may be just mistaken. Even if they are correct as generalities, they may not apply to this individual, for her circumstances may be unusual. Moreover, even if the individual's circumstances are of the standard variety, the customs are designed to suit ordinary characters, and her character may be extraordinary. Mill is conceiving of ways of life as including both ultimate goals and plans of life to achieve the goals. Concentrating now just on the former component, we can say that for Mill in *On Liberty*, what is intrinsically good for me cannot in principle reliably be determined just by consulting the judgments of other persons even if they are reliable judges of their own good, because what is good depends on the type of person one is, and my type may differ from that of the judges. If we make the division of types of persons sufficiently fine-grained, it will turn out that each individual nature is unique, and so what is intrinsically good may vary to some extent from person to person.

A hedonistic theory of the good of the type that Mill asserts in *Utilitarianism* can allow that what is good is relative to the individual without endorsing subjectivism about the good. According to Mill, the relative value of the pleasures available to an individual are fixed by that individual's nature. This is compatible with the further claim that the individual may be mistaken in his own assessments of quantity and quality of pleasure. But what he would be mistaken about is the quantity or quality of pleasure that he himself would derive from various sources. Where Mill seems to go wrong is in trying to fix by stipulation that the consensus of expert judgment (the judgment of other, experienced people about their own experiences) determines the quantity and quality of pleasure that I

would get from one or another sort of experience. This move insists on objectivity by denying relativity to the individual, but this move is unnecessary.

IS THE OBJECTIVE LIST THEORY A THEORY?

There is a rudimentary theory associated with the Objective List account of the good. The theory holds that what is intrinsically good for an individual, good for its own sake rather than as a means to some further good, is to get or achieve the items that are specified on a correct and complete list of such goods. The more that one gets or achieves the listed goods over the course of one's life, the better for oneself is the life that one has lived. Different versions of the theory may stipulate that there is one list for all persons, or that there are different types of persons and a distinct list for each type, or that the objective list for each person is unique to that person. The idea of the Objective List is simply that what is intrinsically good for a person is fixed independently of that person's attitudes or opinions; the items on the list for an individual are there independently of whether the individual has favorable attitudes toward them or himself judges that the items are valuable for him.

Wayne Sumner remarks that virtually all theories of the good including subjective theories will assert similar lists of the things that are sources of value. But a list of the things that are prudentially valuable is not the same as an account of what it is that makes something valuable for an individual. So just providing what purports to be an Objective List in not yet to advance an objective account of the good that can compete with subjective theories, according to Sumner. The Objective List is not then according to Sumner a candidate rival view which an advocate of subjectivism is obliged to rebut in order to provide a complete and successful defense of subjectivism.

But Sumner sweeps aside the Objective List idea too swiftly. Even if a subjective account and an Objective List account generate similar lists of things that are valuable, the status of the items on the lists is different in the two accounts. Suppose accomplishment and relations of love and friendship appear as items in both lists. For the subjectivist, the list is provisional and defeasible, at least in theory. What renders something intrinsically good for someone is that she (under the appropriate conditions specified by the particular subjective theory) has a favorable attitude toward it. If it turns out that our lore about what people will in fact regard favorably under appropriate conditions is mistaken, then the subjectivist is prepared to revise and rewrite the list of valuable things. Not so for the Objective List advocate. The items on the list do not belong there contingently upon the attitudes that people come to have toward them. We might be mistaken now about our assertion that any particular item belongs on the Objective List, but what we would be mistaken about is not a conjecture about what people's attitudes under specified conditions would turn out to be, but rather about what there is most reason to regard as truly valuable. Contrary to Sumner, the Objective List theory is not merely the provision of a list of putative goods. It is also a claim that what it is to be intrinsically valuable for a person, to make that person's life go better for herself, is to be an item that belongs on such a list.

The Objective List theory may be a mistaken rival theory, but it is a rival theory, and cannot be dismissed without a hearing as Sumner attempts to do.

PERFECTIONISM VERSUS THE OBJECTIVE LIST

An objective theory about human good should also be distinguished from Perfectionist theories of the good as these are usually understood. Perfectionism is the

doctrine that the good or intrinsically desirable human life is one that develops to the maximal possible extent the properties that constitute human nature. Thomas Hurka identifies these properties as "those that are essential to humans and conditioned on their being living things."[6] The good life according to perfectionist theory is the life in which the individual develops the excellences of the species to a high degree. Perfectionism might be understood as a moral theory that sets a goal that determines how we ought to conduct our own lives and help others to live or it might be understood as a specification of prudential value, of what makes someone's life go best. Hurka himself understands Perfectionism in the former way and holds that the historical tradition of philosophers fin this camp from Plato onward is, broadly speaking, better understood this way. Still, we might identify well-being, the idea of what makes someone's life go best, the idea of what is noninstrumentally prudentially valuable, with the perfection of our nature. If perfecting someone's life does not make the life better for the one who lives it, the imperative to maximize perfection strikes me as very uncompelling, so I would suppose the best strategy for Perfectionist theory is to claim that perfection equals welfare.

Perfectionism should not be identified with Objective List theories of what makes someone's life go best. Perfectionism is not the family, just one member (or branch) of the family of views. Moreover, Perfectionism takes a narrow view of human good. The excellences it takes do be valuable do seem valuable, but it denies value to much that seems worthwhile.

Among the goods that intrinsically enhance the quality of someone's life, some may have nothing whatsoever to do with fashioning oneself as a more perfect specimen of the human species or as a more perfect specimen of the type of individual one is.

Consider what are sometimes called "cheap thrills," activities that provide pleasure and excitement without any significant effort or sacrifice on the part of the agent and also without the exercise or development of any of the agent's significant talents. Cheap thrills are pleasures with no redeeming social value beyond their pleasantness. The world being as it is, and human nature being what it is, such pleasures seem to me to be important sources of enjoyment that significantly enhance many people's lives in ways for which there is no practical substitute. I take it that the pleasures of cheap thrills will not register at all on a perfectionist measure of the prudential value of people's lives, but I would think that if these pleasures were to disappear without replacement, the world would be immensely worse and most human lives significantly blighted. At least, the issue will surely be open for discussion on an objective view, whereas according to the more narrow doctrine of perfectionism, the insignificance of cheap thrills to the prudential value of lives is a simple closed issue.

EXPERIENCE AND WELL-BEING

Mill's position on the nature of the good in *Utilitarianism* is contentious in another way that sheds light on the comparative assessment of hedonsim, desire fulfillment, and the Objective List theory. Following Bentham, he equates the good for persons with happiness and happiness with pleasure and the absence of pain.[7] This set of equations raises issues about how we are to understand the notions of pleasure and pain as they are used in Mill's theory of the good. Quite aside from these issues, Mill's position looks to be unsatisfactory for a quite general reason. As Robert Nozick has noticed, a hedonistic view such as Mill's, which takes pleasure to be constitutive of good, is a member of a wider family of views, which take the good to be constituted by some

quality of experience.[8] "Experience" here refers to an individual's conscious awareness of aspects of his life as it unfolds moment by moment. Experience is what an individual has when awake or dreaming and does not have in a condition of coma or dreamless sleep. A quality of experience view identifies the good with some aspects of experience. Nozick has a powerful objection against the class of quality of experience views. The objection is expressed in an example. We care, and it is reasonable for us to care, about things other than the quality of our experience. Realization of this point emerges if we contemplate our reaction to an imaginary experience machine, which could give an individual a perfect simulacrum of any life so far as the experience of that life is concerned. Hooked up to the experience machine, you would have the experience of leading any life you might choose, while really being, as Nozick states, "an indeterminate blob" floating in a tank.[9] If we care only about quality of experience, it is irrational to refuse to plug into the experience machine, just as it would be irrational, if my only aim is to open a bottle of beer[10] swiftly, to reject the mechanical aid of a bottle opener and insist upon the slower method of opening the bottle with my teeth. If we nonetheless think that it need not be unreasonable to refuse to live our lives plugged into the experience machine, this signals that we have aims other than achieving any specified type of experience. We want to have faithful friends and be a good friend ourselves, not merely to have the experience of such friendship, and we wish actually to accomplish something significant in the world, not just to have the experience of doing that, and so on.

THE HYBRID VIEW

Despite the experience machine example and its lessons, one might hold fast to

the thought that what is inherently good for a person must entirely consist in the quality of her experience. If we accept that however thrilling to experience, life in the experience machine is just floating as a conscious blob in a tank, and so not a genuinely good life, we might embrace a hybrid view according to which the character of one's experience can vary in value not just in virtue of its subjectively felt quality but also in virtue of its relationship to the world.

The hybrid view would allow us to judge that false pleasures contribute less to the value of the life of the person who experiences them than they otherwise would. A "false" pleasure here is one that is accompanied by significant false beliefs about the nature of the experience in which the agent finds enjoyment. Perhaps a better position would be that the value of a pleasure may vary not just in virtue of its felt quality but also in virtue of the actual character of the activity in the experience of which pleasure is taken. This position would allow discounting the value of pleasure taken in the supposed awareness that one's spouse is sexually faithful when this is not actually the case. But the position would be sufficiently flexible to allow that false beliefs held by an agent about a pleasurable experience can render the pleasure more valuable than it would otherwise be if the experience is actually more valuable or admirable than the agent believes. For example, one might hold that the bittersweet pleasure of completing a long-term project of writing an epic poem, which one believes to be weak but which is actually brilliantly effective, has more value than it would have if one's belief about the weakness of the poem were correct.

Mill's position in *Utilitarianism* might be an instance of a hybrid view.[11] One might interpret Mill as holding that nothing is prudentially valuable except the experience

of one's activity, and experience must be pleasurable to be valuable. The pleasure of pleasurable activities varies in intensity and duration, and the more pleasure an activity contains, the more valuable it is. But besides differing in quantity of pleasure, pleasurable activities differ in their quality, which is measured by the preferences for one pleasurable activity over another by knowledgeable and competent experts. These experts might judge one activity such as surfing to be of higher quality than another activity such as sunbathing, so that surfing yields more prudential value per unit of pleasure it delivers than sunbathing does. Confronted with the experience machine example, Mill on this interpretation should reply that whether, for example, the pleasures of actual friendship are superior to the pleasures of experience machine simulations of friendship is determined by the preferences of judges who have tried both types of pleasure and are fully capable of appreciating each. Nothing in Mill's testing procedure ensures that the judges in arriving at their preferences in such cases should attend only to the felt quality of the experiences. They might prefer actual friendship pleasure over experience machine pleasure because they regard the former as more fitting for human beings, worthy, dignified, and the like.

Whatever other difficulties the hybrid view might face, it seems deficient for a simple reason. An individual may have a strong and reasonable desire that a certain state of affairs concerning himself should obtain. This state of affairs might involve no experience of any sort on the part of the desiring agent. One desires that the novel one has written should prove to be a good novel. Here the state of affairs that is desired does not essentially involve any experience of any sort on the part of the agent. Yet it is plausible to suppose that a desire of this sort, if satisfied, contributes directly to the well-

being of the agent. If this claim is correct, the hybrid view is doomed.

DESIRE SATISFACTION

If we reject the hybrid view, and with it the claim that "nothing can make our lives go better or worse unless it somehow affects the quality of our experience,"[12] the rival view that immediately becomes salient is the Desire Fulfillment Theory. We can always put the content of a desire in the form of a proposition; my desire for strawberries at breakfast is the desire that the proposition "Arneson eats strawberries at breakfast" should become true. A desire is fulfilled when the associated proposition becomes true. The fulfillment of a desire need not involve any experience of fulfillment, and the satisfaction of some desires can occur without the occurrence of any conscious episodes of any sort in the desirer. My desire that the novel I have written is praiseworthy is fulfilled just in case it is praiseworthy, whatever reasonable or unreasonable opinions on this matter I might come to hold. So the Desire Fulfillment Theory is not embarrassed by the fact that one's desires range beyond one's actual or possible experience. Fulfillment of basic (i.e., noninstrumental) desires can enhance well-being whether or not the fulfillment is experienced or even capable of being experienced.

According to the Desire Fulfillment Theory, one's life goes better, the more it is the case that one's basic desires are satisfied, with desires that rank as more important in the agent's hierarchy of desires counting for more if fulfilled.

This simple desire fulfillment view is vulnerable to two significant objections. First, not all of an agent's desires plausibly bear on her well-being. I might listen to a televised plea for famine relief, and form the desire to aid distant starving strangers, without myself thinking (and without its being plausible for anyone else to think) that the

fulfillment of this desire would in any way make my life go better. So one needs to restrict somehow the class of basic desires whose fulfillment contributes to well-being. It will not do to stipulate that each agent determines for herself which of her basic desires bear on her well-being. Surely an agent could make a mistake in making this determination, and we need some way of deciding when a mistake occurs. And an account is needed of what an agent is doing in making the determination that fixes which of her desires shall contribute to her well-being. If we say that that she divides her basic desires into two piles, those whose satisfaction would contribute to her well-being and the rest, our account is rendered viciously circular, and requires that we already have an idea of well-being independent of desire fulfillment.[13]

It is perhaps worth noting that switching allegiance from a Desire Fulfillment to an Objective List theory of well-being does not solve this difficulty but only reduces its scope. At least this is so if desire fulfillment ends up being an entry on the List, as is surely plausible. Surely satisfying the basic desires one regards as important over the course of one's life is one component of a good life. Then for this component, the problem of finding a principled restriction on the class of desires whose fulfillment contributes to well-being still remains.

The second objection against simple Desire Fulfillment is that some desires that are felt to be of great importance by the individual, and desired for their own sake, not as a means to further goals, are only desired because the individual is confused, ignorant, or making reasoning errors. These desires would not survive reflective critical scrutiny. Why suppose their satisfaction is good for the desirer at all? Suppose my wife's ultimate desire in life is to construct a huge monument to my virtue in our back yard. She wants

this for its own sake, and by dint of great personal sacrifice and effort succeeds in fulfilling this aim, so that our house is overshadowed by this statue. Yet if it is also the case that my wife would not have had this desire if she had not erred in her estimation of my virtue by wildly overestimating it, we will be reluctant to accept that satisfaction of this desire really contributes to her well-being. This reluctance is tantamount to unwillingness to accept the simple Desire Fulfillment view as a satisfactory account of what makes someone's life go well.

THE PROBLEM OF NONPRUDENTIAL DESIRE

Of the two objections against the desire satisfaction account just raised, the first may be the more intractable. The second invites the response that only those basic desires that do not arise from cognitive error or ignorance intrinsically enhance a person's well-being if they are satisfied. This response is explored in the next three sections. Whether or not it ultimately succeeds, this strategy of refining the desire satisfaction account surely has some initial plausibility. But this strategy does nothing to resolve the first difficulty. A person may well desire for its own sake something other than her own well-being, and may continue to do so even after ideal critical scrutiny with full information.

To save the desire satisfaction account, one must find a principled way of restricting the portion of an individual's basic desires, satisfaction of which constitutes her well-being. Examples such as desiring that life be discovered somewhere in outer space or desiring that distant strangers should not suffer in poverty might suggest the proposal that only desires that concern the agent's own life qualify as welfare-determining for that agent. But the desire to sacrifice one's life for the sake of others

evidently concerns one's own life but intuitively is not such that its satisfaction intrinsically increases one's well-being.

Another possible restriction is to exclude from the set of welfare-determining desires those that are adopted by the agent from moral considerations. If I desire to keep a promise because I believe that promise-keeping is morally obligatory, it does seem sensible to deny that my life goes better if this desire is fulfilled. But there are other examples. I might come to have a strong desire that endangered animal species survive or that distant strangers should not live in poverty even if I am moved to adopt the desire by sympathy for the plight of the species and the strangers quite independently of moral considerations.

Without pursuing this issue further, I will simply register my conviction that there is no viable solution to the problem of nonprudential desire. The next sections pursue the strengths and weaknesses of simple and refined desire satisfaction accounts on the assumption that this problem can be solved despite the doubts registered here. It turns out that even if there were no nonprudential desire problem the desire satisfaction account would still be plagued with troubles.

Another road might be taken at this juncture. One might reinterpret the desire satisfaction account as giving a necessary, not a sufficient condition for prudential value. Nothing can intrinsically enhance an individual's well-being unless she desires that thing. The fact that one can seemingly have desires for what does not enhance one's well-being is no embarrassment for this less ambitious account.

Desire-satisfaction construed as a necessary condition might play a role in many types of analysis of prudential value. Perhaps the most plausible mixed theories of this

sort will combine desire-satisfaction with either a quality of experience requirement or an Objective List requirement. The first view would maintain that if something intrinsically enhances an individual's well-being, it must be desired by that individual and pleasurable. The second view would maintain that if something intrinsically enhances an individual's well-being, it must be desired by that individual and objectively worthwhile. The second view is discussed, and rejected, later in this essay, when the endorsement constraint is examined and found wanting. The claim that nothing can intrinsically enhance an individual's welfare unless she desires it is one specific version of the endorsement constraint. The first view supposes that nothing can intrinsically enhance an individual's well-being unless the experience of that putative good is pleasurable (or in the more general case, has a desirable quality). The "Hybrid View" section of this essay already has criticized this position, which cannot be upheld by anyone who acknowledges that some contributors to well-being are not experienced at all. For example, the desire that one's childrearing activity should be successful in the sense that one's child comes to have a good life is not a desire to have any sort of experience. If such a desire can contribute to one's well-being, then no mixed view that includes an experience requirement as a necessary condition for prudential value can be correct.

INFORMED DESIRE SATISFACTION

Consider again the claim that the satisfaction of any of an individual's basic desires intrinsically enhances her well-being, and assume that the nonprudential desire problem can be solved. In response to the objection that some desires are based on mistakes and ignorance, turn now to refinements of Desire Fulfillment theories that hold that the desires, satisfaction of which increases well-being, are those an agent would form

under ideal conditions for desire formation. Among these conditions, avoidance of the influence of mistaken belief and of ignorance of material facts bulks large, so the class of theories has been labelled "Informed Desire Theories of Well Being."[14]

Immediately doubts arise as to whether this theoretical move is in the right direction. Suppose that in my actual benighted state I strongly desire to learn quantum physics, but if I were fully informed about the matters that bear on the reasonableness of this choice, I would already know quantum physics, hence would have no desire to acquire further understanding of this field. This counterfactual does not intuitively diminish the attractiveness of my present desire, but the Informed Desire Theory seems to grind out the result that satisfaction of my desire to learn physics would not increase my well-being because the desire would not be formed under ideal conditions. To avoid this result, Peter Railton has suggested a sophisticated formulation of the idea: "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."[15] We construct in thought a cognitively ideal version of myself, an ideal advisor, and what this guardian angel would want me to want fixes the set of basic desires the satisfaction of which constitutes my well-being.

According to the ideal advisor versions of informed desire theories, what is intrinsically good for an individual is determined by what an ideally informed and reflective version of the individual would want the actual (perhaps not fully informed and reflective) individual to want for its own sake. If my ideal advisor would want me to want to eat fish, then eating fish is intrinsically good for me.

Informed desire satisfaction theories of the good have received rough treatment recently at the hands of philosophical critics. Some of these criticisms strike me as unfair, or at least as nondecisive. The numbered list below contains five such nondecisive objections and my reasons for finding them so.

1. One objection raised against this type of account is that perhaps my ideal advisor would not be favorably disposed to me, so his advice about what I should want might be hostile.[16] Starting from my personality, and then becoming ideally informed, the advisor in the process of becoming informed might develop a revulsion against my personality type, and be indifferent to my welfare. Hence I should not necessarily take the dictates of the ideal advisor as determinative of my welfare.

To block this objection, it suffices to stipulate that the ideal advisor will be sympathetic to the individual whose welfare his desires fix. The ideal advisor's sole aim is to advance the well-being of the advisee.

2. Another set of objections begins with the speculation that in the course of becoming fully informed, the ideal advisor, even though starting with my personality, may alter psychologically to such an extent that I should not necessarily regard the desires of this very different individual for my well-being as normative for me.[17] The fact that my ideal advisor would want me to want X might not induce me to want X. But, so the objection runs, it was supposed to be part of the attraction of ideal advisor views that they would satisfy an internalist constraint. And according to internalism, any valid claim as to what is good for me must motivate me to want that thing, at least under some ideal conditions. As Railton observes, "it would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone's good to imagine that it might fail in any way to engage him."[18]

My response to this objection is that internalism is too demanding a condition to impose on theories of the good, so the fact that informed desire theories fail to meet the condition, if indeed it is a fact, casts no discredit on these theories. It may be that some psychological defect, some missing screw in the desiring department of my brain, prevents me from desiring some things that are in fact good for me. My ideal advisor will want me to want these things, and regret my psychological incapacity. Given the incapacity, if I were to discover that my ideal advisor would want me to want these things which seem undesirable to me, this knowledge would ex hypothesi not be sufficient to cause me to desire them. Without further argument to motivate an internalist constraint on acceptable theories of well-being, this possibility by itself does not reveal a defect in the ideal advisor account.

3. Wayne Sumner has found troublesome what he takes to be the prospective nature of desire. Desires according to Sumner are always future-oriented. I can have a wish, but not a genuine desire, that the past be other than it turned out to be. But some goods fall into my lap without my having formed any antecedent desire for them. I never desired to witness the sunrise orange glow on the cliffs below Mount Whitney, but there is is, and it's wonderful. But since I failed to entertain a prospective desire for this treat, and cannot logically form a desire about a past occurrence, this good slips between the slats of the ideal advisor account, and does not register in that account as a contribution to my well-being.[19] One might wonder whether the counterexample could be deflected by finding a more abstract desire that the unique sunrise experience qualifies as satisfying. But I have a prior worry. It seems incorrect to assert that desires cannot be retrospective. I performed miserably in the last tournament of my dismal high school wrestling career,

and ever since then I have strongly desired that I had performed better. This is not a mere idle wish; I would give up resources to satisfy this aim if doing so would be useful. Or if one insists that "desires" regarding the past properly are characterized as wishes, then we can readily construct a new notion of *desire* that incorporates the prospective attitudes that Sumner counts as desires plus heartfelt wishes regarding the past, and reconstruct the ideal advisor informed desire view with this revisionary understanding of *desire.*

4. Another objection is that the idea of becoming fully informed is radically indeterminate.[20] Information can be presented to an individual in different ways through different media. A television broadcast, a rousing speech, a novel, a poem, a painting, a popular song can all present the same propositions to an audience of would-be ideal advisors who are becoming fully and vividly informed. But there is no determinate answer to the question, which mode of presentation conveys a more vivid impression. There are many dimensions of vividness corresponding to the various modes of presentation. Being more vividly informed along one dimension is being informed less vividly along other dimensions. Presenting information in all possible modes of presentation seriatim is no solution, even if the idea is coherent, because this would just be a mind-deadening nearly interminable and devastatingly boring presentation.

If the notion of becoming fully and vividly informed is indeterminate, this slack will be transmitted to yield indeterminacy in the idea of what is good for a person according to the ideal advisor account. However, this is an objection against the account only if it can be shown that the ideal advisor account yields indeterminacy where we have good reason to believe there should be none. But perhaps the correct inference to draw is that the notion of what is good for a person is inherently indeterminate, so that it is (for

example) neither the case that eating fish nor eating fowl is a better culinary experience for me, because the judgment of my ideal advisor on these putative goods is unstable in response to various modes of presentation of the relevant information. It might turn out to be a strength of the ideal advisor account that it allows for only limited commensurability of prudential value. One's ideal advisor will know the psychological laws and propensities that govern responsiveness of creatures such as us to varying types of presentation of information, and will take steps to prevent arbitrary contingencies such as order of presentation to affect the desire formation process unless this is unavoidable. But if it is a deep truth about my individual nature that a person of my type me likes fowl better than fish if fowl is tasted first in life and fish better if the taste of fish comes first, then neither fish nor fowl is inherently better, and if I have not yet tasted either, which I get is a "don't care" in the judgment of my ideal advisor.

5. An objection along somewhat the same line denies that one could actually become fully and vividly informed as the application of the ideal advisor account requires.[21] In one possible life I might lead, I am innocent as a choir boy, and in another possible life, I become conversant with sin; in one life, I become a fierce warrior; in another, a gentle, sensitive soul. These traits cannot be combined in a single person. I cannot then hold in one consciousness all of these and the myriad other possible experiences I would have to have in order to qualify as fully informed so that my ideally informed self could give me authoritative guidance about well-being.

In response: The difficulties proposed arise from the assumption that to be fully informed, one must actually experience all of the putative goods which are to be ordered for choiceworthiness. But the assumption seems misguided. The ideal advisor starts

with an individual personality, including whatever fund of experience the particular individual has had. In the process of becoming ideally informed, the advisor gains all relevant propositional knowledge that is material to this ordering of goods. No experience is necessary, so the alleged psychological difficulties of combining opposed and mutually incompatible experiences are of no concern.

If I am wondering whether the joys of heroin render heroin usage an important constituent of my good, it is not (I am claiming) necessary for me to sample heroin, and to become fully and vividly informed it would not be necessary for the ideal advisor version of myself to live a complete life as a drug addict on the streets. It suffices to know all about heroin usage and drug addiction.

If one denies this last claim, the following problem emerges. Suppose that I know that a certain experience will be (as matters now seem from my present evaluative perspective) corrupting. The experience of lording it over others in Simon Legree fashion will, I know full well, give me a strong taste for the pleasures of domination, which I do not now admire. Suppose that if propositional knowledge suffices for becoming fully informed, I can become in the relevant sense fully informed about Simon Legree pleasures without actually experiencing them and becoming addicted to them. But if full and vivid experience is necessary for becoming a being whose desires are authoritative determiners of my well-being, then to become an ideal advisor I must let myself become corrupted against (what I now regard as) my better judgment. There is no cognitive defect in my present aversion to Simon Legree pleasure, and the aversion is based on no reasoning errors and let us suppose no factual ignorance or confusion of any kind. I wish the ideal advisor account to allow that I can be relevantly fully informed

without actually undergoing the experience that I judge would have a bad effect on my desire formation. That requires not interpreting "fully informed" as "fully experienced."

INFORMED DESIRE AND THE BADNESS OF PAIN

An apparent attraction of a full information ideal desire theory is that it offers a solution to the following puzzle about the badness of pain and the goodness of pleasure. Pain is evidently undesirable, and pleasure desirable, for their own sakes and quite independently of their instrumental value and disvalue. Suppose we say that pain would not be undesirable if it were not disliked by the one who experiences it, and pleasure would not be desirable if it did not evoke liking. But if we opt for the position that our likings and dislikings determine what is valuable, we seem to be drifting back toward some version of a simple desire satisfaction view. Moreover, if my desire to avoid pain determines that pain is bad, why does not the desire of an anorexic to forego continued life if that conflicts with her ideal of a thin body determine that continued life, in these circumstances, is bad for her? On the one hand, if we want to say our likings and dislikings play a constitutive or determining role in the badness of pain and ther goodness of pleasure, what distinguishes these cases from others in which we do not want to take this line? On the other hand, if we consistently reject the possibility that our likings and likings do play such a constitutive or determining role, we seem stuck with the unappealing consequences that the badness of pain and the goodness of pleasure is thrown into doubt.[22]

If we say that the desires, satisfaction of which enhances our well-being, are those that would survive ideal critical reflection with full information, we have a response to the puzzle. The desires for pleasure and against pain survive critical reflection for an odd

reason. We cannot think of anything to say for or against either pleasure or pain, and our inability to find reasons bearing on the matters does not shake our initial aversion from pain and attraction to pleasure. Nor can we imagine that further information of any sort would alter our inchoate confidence. The conviction that pain is bad and pleasure good does fit smoothly into the set of our considered judgments in the widest reflective equilibrium we can attain. If one imagines a life that is wonderful in every detail, and then adds the further stipulation that the person is either miserable throughout her life or thoroughly enjoys almost every minute of it (without the pain being debilitating, or the pleasure stimulating, in ways that affect the degree to which any other goods are attained), one is strongly inclined to prefer, and to prefer for those one cares about, the life with pleasure to the life that is pain-filled, all else being equal.

But in this picture desire is an idle wheel. The work is done by plausibility of the suggestion that the conviction that pain is bad and pleasure good would withstand ideal critical reflection. Ideal critical reflection puts us in an ideal position to appreciate the true worth of putative goods and bads. Pains and pleasures are kinds of sensations, or rather a distinctive kind of aspect that colors a wide range of kinds of experiences. Pleasure and pain feel a certain way that uniformly evokes disliking in the case of the former and liking in the case of the latter. Although it sounds stodgy to say it, the way pain feels is good and sufficient reason to dislike it. The peculiarity of pleasure and pain is that the quality of experience they provide yields inchoate reasons that might be supposed to resist articulation. There is nothing to say that warrants the claim that a headache is bad, beyond the bare observation that it is bad owing to the way it feels. If someone claims to like a sensation that is identical to the experience of a headache I find

horrible, the possibilities are either that the phenomenology is really different (the person, on morphine, feels the pain but not its painful aspect) or that the person's mechanism that induces liking and disliking is faulty. If the person experiences a headache just like mine, the attitude of liking is an inappropriate reaction.[23] I conclude that accounting for the badness of pain does not require embracing a desire fulfillment account.

INFORMED DESIRE FULFILLMENT VERSUS THE OBJECTIVE LIST

We can try to test a sophisticated ideal advisor version of a desire fulfillment view against the rival Objective List doctrine by imagining a scenario in which an individual has a life that is rich in objective list goods but poor in the amount of informed desire fulfillment that is attained. Suppose an individual in very favorable circumstances forms extremely demanding ambitions. Her most important desires are grand in their nature--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 devoted to her memory. In all of these cases the person desires not merely to make a good try at achieving these ambitions but to be successful in these diverse domains. These life goals are reasonable, let's say, and where the height of the ambition creates a high risk of failure, the risks are worth taking all things considered. Measured by the self-chosen standards of her own well-considered desires, the woman's life turns out to be a failure. What the person most cares about does not come about as she wishes. Yet in the course of piling up these failures, the person gets all of the goods on the Objective List to an extraordinarily high degree. Even if satisfying one's major defining life goals is one item on the Objective List, the woman's 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. If in contemplating cases of this sort we come to think that one can lead an excellent life that is high in prudential value despite being a failure on the dimension of informed desire fulfillment, we are then inclining toward acceptance of the Objective List conception of what makes someone's life go best.

The flip side of this test is to imagine that someone in unfortunate circumstances forms quite limited and unambitious desires that are reasonable given the bleak conditions she faces. Being blind, I don't form ambitions that require eyesight, and being impoverished, I don't form ambitions that require wealth to have a reasonable prospect of success, and being unintelligent, I don't form ambitions that would strain my limited brain power, and lacking social connections, I don't form ambitions that can be achieved only with the help of powerful allies. Judged against the baseline of my original grim life circumstances, I am reasonably lucky, and most of my important desires are fulfilled over the course of my life. These desires are not ill chosen; they would be endorsed and affirmed by the fully informed and rational ideal advisor whose advice determines what is prudentially valuable for me according to Full Information accounts of the good. In these circumstances it seems that I succeed in leading a good, choiceworthy life according to the Informed Desire Fulfillment reckoning, but not according to a plausible application of an Objective List theory. The latter but not the former accounting will register at full value the important life goods I did not achieve and which did not enter (fully) into my set of basic life desires because I foresaw that insofar as I could affect by character planning the desires I came to have, it would do me no good to develop desires that would stand virtually no chance of fulfillment.

In cases where Informed Desire and Objective List accounts give different verdicts on the quality of a life, the Objective List verdicts are more compelling. But it should be noted that this position requires backing of a type this essay does not try to supply. I have not introduced any way to measure the success of a life according to informed desire and Objective List standards. I have relied on hunches as to what the upshot of applying plausible measures derived from both theories would be. To go further would require an investigation of the prospects for an objective standard of interpersonal comparison of well-being. This would be to take up the skepticism issue that I stated at the outset I would not be exploring in this essay.

THE DECISIVE OBJECTION[24]

One line of objections against the informed desire view might appear to have a gimmicky and ad hoc flavor, but in fact raises a central issue. An example in this vein is offered by Allan Gibbard, who observes that if you became fully and vividly informed of the internal processes of digestion of a delicious meal, you might lose your desire for savoring delicious food, but even if this should be so, this odd fact should not undermine the claim that enjoyment of good food is a constituent of the good life.[25] The objection invites the reply that one's ideal advisor will know about this possible psychological link and will discount its influence, so that even if the advisor becomes nauseated by revulsion at the thought of digestion, he will still want his advisee to want to enjoy good food.

Put in more general terms, Gibbard's point, and the point of several other objections canvassed, is that the essence of the informed desire view is that what the process of becoming fully informed and critically reflecting causes one to desire for its

own sake is good for one (for ideal advisor views, that what the process of learning and reflection causes the advisor to want one to want for its own sake is good for one). But nothing bars this causal process from generating outcomes in a way that does not intuitively confer any desirability on the resultant basic desires. It might simply be a brute psychological fact about me that if I were to become fully informed about grapes, this process would set off a chemical process in my brain that would lead me to crave counting blades of grass on courthouse lawns as my primary life aim. This would seem to be an oddity of my brain, not an indicator of my true well-being. If this were true of everyone, not just me, the same point would still hold. The informed desire theories purport to establish that a certain causal process confers desirability, but the characterization of the causal process does not secure this result and it does not seem that it could be altered to guarantee the right result. Griffin evidently is responding to this worry when he interprets the information requirement in an informed desire account as, in effect, whatever it takes to produce an adequate response to the possible objects of desire. He writes, "So an `informed' desire is one formed by appreciation of the nature of its object, and it includes anything necessary to achieve it."[26] The critic of the account will dig in her heels and insist that people's psychology, due to some quirk of evolution, might be such that fully appreciating the nature of some objects produces bizarre desires regarding them, but the fact that the objects do not appear as desirable in the light of this causal process does not detract from their desirability. One might further refine Griffin's proposal by demanding that an informed desire must be formed only by correct appreciation of its object and not by anything else including any extraneous causal process that happens to accompany correct appreciation. But at this point it does seem

that the account has been refined into nonexistence. We are no longer appealing to what people would desire under ideal circumstances of desire formation as theoretically determining what is prudentially valuable. Instead the work is done by appeal to "correct appreciation," which can only mean finding desirable what truly is desirable.

THE ENDORSEMENT CONSTRAINT

Suppose one holds that gaining well-being is to be identified with attaining what is objectively choiceworthy—the items on the Objective List. It then turns out to be entirely a contingent matter whether or not an individual has any positive attitude of any sort towards the attainments that render her life good. My life might be rich in the goods that are prominent on the Objective List even though I find these constituents of my life to be utterly repulsive.

Even if the position is taken that one of the entries on the Objective List is being psychologically related in the right way to one's achievements of other goods on this list, this attitudinal good will be just one of several entries. The possibility is still open that one could score sufficiently high on the other dimensions of the good that register on the List that one could qualify as living a fine life even though one lacks any positive attitude toward any of the items that constitute one's well-being.

Discomfort with this result motivates the construction of mixed theories of prudential value that require that any occurrence that contributes intrinsically to an individual's well-being must be accompanied by some positive attitude on the part of the individual toward that occurrence. On such a view, nothing counts as an objectively valuable attainment unless it is subjectively affirmed by the one who has gained the attainment.

This endorsement constraint can take various forms. I shall consider two versions in this section and a general form of the constraint in the next. One idea, given eloquent expression by Ronald Dworkin, is that nothing can make a basic, noninstrumental contribution to the goodness of a person's life unless it is endorsed by that very person.[27] A second version has been proposed by James Griffin as a constraint on hypothetical ideal desire satisfaction accounts of the good.[28] The constraint is that any noninstrumental, basic desire whose satisfaction contributes to an individual's well-being must be actual when satisfied. So to speak, the hypothetical ideal desire must be endorsed by the person and so become her desire in order that its satisfaction contribute to her well-being.

The attraction of the proposals is evident. 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.

The endorsement constraint allows us to say that regardless of whether the good that we are contemplating gaining for an individual even though she does not endorse it is great or puny, the "good" gained for the person under this condition will be illusory, because no unendorsed good can contribute to the value of someone's life. In his discussion of the endorsement constraint Dworkin skillfully exhibits how it enables one to combine an objective or perfectionist account of human good with a strong liberal moral presumption against just the type of paternalism that arouses our strong antipathy. *Paternalism* in general is restricting someone's liberty against her will for her own good. The type of paternalism that the endorsement constraint seems firmly to prohibit is

restricting a competent individual's liberty against her will in order to secure for her a basic, noninstrumental good that she does not recognize as such.

Griffin's version of the endorsement constraint reveals a similar attraction. Some examples will incline us toward accepting it. For example, even if an ideally informed and reflective version of myself would love drinking champagne, if my actual uninformed and unreflective self is averse to the stuff, no gain in my utility can be secured by getting me to drink some when I lack all desire to do that.

Despite their glittering attractive qualities, both versions of the endorsement constraint should be resisted.

The objection to the 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. Suppose Samantha writes a brilliant poem but denies that this achievement has any value or in any way enhances her life. Her ground for this dismissal is a shallow and silly aesthetic theory which she has thoughtlessly embraced. In these circumstances, her failure to endorse her achievement does not negate its value for her. No doubt her utility would be higher, other things being equal, if she were to endorse it, because a subjective sense of accomplishment is itself a not inconsiderable good, especially when it is well grounded on genuine accomplishment. But this point is fully compatible with rejection of the endorsement constraint. Note also that often other things are not equal. Samantha might be so disposed that becoming the sort of person who would endorse her achievements according to a sensible scale of merit would also involve becoming the sort of person who is not likely to achieve much. In such a case we might prefer for Samantha's own good that she not develop her capacity for self-

endorsement but instead develop and exercise her capacity for significant achievement.

There are several possible lines of objection against this criticism of the endorsement constraint, but none proves successful. One might insist that the objection fails to distinguish the value of Samantha's achievement, impersonally regarded as an achievement, and its value regarded as a contribution to Samantha's life. Not everything Samantha does that is good is plausibly viewed as good for Samantha. How can an achievement that is utterly futile and worthless in Samantha's eyes nonetheless qualify as an enhancement of her well-being?

To blunt the force of this rhetorical question, it suffices to note that Samantha's disposition to nonendorsement might be an odd outlier among her psychological traits. She might 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. She just regards what she is doing as worthless on the strength of a bad aesthetic theory which she accepts. To explain how a nonendorsed achievement can increase someone's utility is to appeal to the strength of the Objective List account of well-being. Some things are important components of the good life. Having them, one's life is enriched. Lacking them, one's life is impoverished. Failing to endorse them just means one is making mistaken evaluations and does not automatically or necessarily alter their value. Lacking a desire for them merely means one's desires are defective because not arising from a proper appreciation of their possible objects. Suppose improbably that a person attains all of the significant items on the best formulation of the Objective List (other than the single good of authentically endorsing and approving the shape of the life one is living) but fails to endorse any of them for miscellaneous reasons, none of which would

withstand scrutiny. The person has it all, but fails to endorse her great riches. I find it stretches credibility past the breaking point to maintain that this single quirk of her valuations reduces all of her riches to nothing.

Another line of objection begins with the suspicion that if an individual is correctly characterized as seeking or pursuing some good, she must see it as valuable or good in some way. We do not seek things in the belief that they are bad. But this objection is mistaken, and anyway would be powerless to support the endorsement constraint. This last point comes into view once we notice that some goods of human life do not come to us as a result of our striving. They simply happen. These manna from heaven goods would not have to be endorsed by us to count as genuine goods even if it were the case that in order to seek or pursue a good one must endorse it as good. But anyway it is not true that in order to seek or pursue a good one must endorse it as good. One might see the object of one's pursuit as bad in itself, but a useful means to some further goal. In this spirit Samantha might regard her poetry-writing as hack work but useful nonetheless for producing her livelihood. Or one might pursue something, no doubt finding it attractive in some respect, even though one steadily believes the object of one's striving is bad all things considered, and pursues it just the same due to weakness of will. Or one might strive to gain something on a whim, without considering the true merits of what one is striving for, and when one contemplates this heavy issue of true merits, one is befuddled by it, and emits a confused dismissal.

When an individual fails to endorse a putative good that she either seeks and gets or just gets without seeking, there are two cases to consider. In the first type of case the individual does not endorse the good but does not herself regard her endorsement as a

necessary condition for its being so that the putative good has some positive value. She has either not considered the issue or has considered it and does not take her endorsement to be a sine qua non for value. In the second type of case, the individual does believe that if she does not endorse the putative good, it cannot contribute noninstrumentally to the value of her life. But even in the second type of case, we may believe the individual is just wrong on this matter, and the grounds for overriding the individual's own judgment may be powerful. Evaluative judgments are not self-certifying, not in this or any other case.

The endorsement constraint gains unmerited plausibility if one fails to distinguish a general claim about human psychology from a conceptual claim. It is often the case that putative goods that are not regarded as goods by those who get them lack zest, intensity, and strength. If I do not regard professional wrestling to be a worthwhile activity and do not believe that enjoyment gained from watching it adds much value to anyone's life, I am very unlikely to get much value from time spent watching professional wrestling. I probably cannot reach the enjoyment to which an avid fan has ready access. But homely truths of this sort will not add up to a justification of the endorsement constraint.

The endorsement constraint only holds that a precondition of value for an agent is endorsement by the agent, and does not contain any commitment to the further idea that if something is endorsed by an agent, it has some value. Nor does the endorsement constraint per se make any claim to the effect that the stronger one's endorsement of a putative good, the greater the value of the good, provided one gets it. The former claim is obviously incorrect. With respect to the latter claim, I would hold it more plausible to

think that other things 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. If I am listening to a great performance of a great symphony, my appreciation heightens the value of the experience, and if I am listening to a schlocky performance of a mediocre symphony but enjoying it anyway, the value of the experience is enhanced since it is not tinged with false valuation.

The actual desire version of the endorsement constraint goes astray for much the same reason that the Dworkin version of the endorsement constraint is defective. If I have a minor talent of a not especially significant sort, I may be led by snobbery or shame to have an aversion against exercising the talent. Suppose the talent is for singing moderately well in a choir, or for being a moderately efficient bookkeeper. But singing in a choir and keeping accurate accounts may be the best things I can do, and doing these activities may produce genuine but modest accomplishment, which does not cease to be accomplishment, and genuinely prudentially valuable, despite my lack of desire for it.

WEAK ENDORSEMENT

Consider the further proposal that for something to qualify as intrinsically enhancing the quality of a person's life, either the thing must be desired by the individual who gets it or endorsed by her. Or consider the still weaker version of the endorsement constraint, which I call the "weak endorsement constraint." It simply holds that nothing can intrinsically enhance the quality of a person's life unless that person has some positive, affirmative attitude toward that element of her life. The root idea is that a purportedly happy occurrence in one's life that leaves one utterly cold cannot intrinsically enhance one's well-being. Some of my objections against the Dworkin and Griffin

versions of the endorsement constraint have appealed to the possibility that an agent could be getting some great good and having some pro-attitude toward it but failing to have the precise attitude that Dworkin or Griffin insist is necessary. These objections might appear to concede the correctness of the weak endorsement constraint.[29]

One should also note another dimension along which the endorsement constraint might be relaxed. To this point I have been considering versions of the constraint that require simultaneous getting of the good and endorsing of it. One might weaken the constraint by requiring that nothing intrinsically enhances my well-being unless I have some positive attitude toward it but allowing that I might have the requisite attitude at any time of my life, not necessarily at the time that the good is obtained. (This relaxed version of the constraint might strike some adherents of it as too weak. Imagine that at age ten I wanted very much to climb El Capitan on my sixtieth birthday and that doing this would rank high on the Objective List standard but that at age 60 my actual desires are oriented toward sedentary activities and the prospect of satisfying this past desire now seems repulsive to me. The spirit of the endorsement constraint surely yields the verdict that if I do the climb but remain utterly alienated from it in my attitudes, it cannot intrinsically enhance my well-being.) Another possible relaxed version would insist that one must have some pro-attitude toward any putative good one obtains, no matter how objectively choiceworthy it is, and that one must have the affirmative attitude either simultaneously with the achievement or in retrospect. My further remarks concern the simultaneous version of the weak endorsement constraint. I believe that the difficulties I raise for it apply also to versions that relax the simultaneity requirement, but I shall not pursue this issue.

One might have the thought that the person who lives well according to the Objective List account but fails to satisfy the weak endorsement constraint goes through life unhappy, entirely frustrated in that none of her important desires and life ambitions are fulfilled, and completely lacking in subjective satisfaction. Such a life would doubtless be barren and low in prudential value. But the 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 types 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 dimensions of the good life) in order for the life to qualify as attaining a satisfactory level of overall well-being. Features 1 and 2 do seem plausible, so it may well be that the correct Objective List account would include them. But 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 positive attitudes toward any components of one's life that are entries on the Objective List and that significantly intrinsically enhance one's well-being.

Suppose that Samantha experiences reciprocal love. She deeply loves another who loves her in return. Suppose that having such a loving relationship is deemed objectively choiceworthy, so having it intrinsically enhances one's well-being according tot he Objective List account. But Samantha entirely lacks positive attitudes toward this aspect of her life. She neither endorses this loving relationship nor actually desires it.

She subscribes to a Stoic philosophy of life according to which such an attachment to a person lowers the quality of her life as she conceives it, and her desires follow her (false, we are assuming) theoretical beliefs. She experiences the choiceworthy thing, having a loving relationship, but her attainment of this good is due to weakness of will on her part. Of course she has the desires that are part of having a loving relationship, but she has no positive attitude of any sort toward the having of this relationship. And so it goes for other elements of her life. She attains many important goods that qualify as choiceworthy according to the Objective List account, and she experiences a wealth of happiness, pleasure, and related subjective satisfactions. However, her satisfactions and desire fulfillment fail to connect to her objectively choiceworthy achievements in the right way so as to satisfy the weak endorsement constraint. (It may be hard to imagine the case of Samantha as psychologically plausible, but our concern is the logic of the concepts of human flourishing, not what is empirically likely.) Once the issue is squarely posed and irrelevant issues are put aside, I find the weak endorsement case deeply counterintuitive in the verdict it must yield on Samantha's life. The weak endorsement constraint requires us to hold that even if we concede that having a loving relationship is a great human good and that Samantha has one, this attainment counts for nothing so far as her well-being is concerned, given that she lacks positive attitudes toward her great achievement. And the same goes for the other objectively valuable achievements in her (as we are imagining it) rich life. She is happy and has gained many objectively valuable attainments, but her alienation from these attainments means not just that her life is less valuable than it ideally might have been, but that none of her attainments intrinsically enhances her well-being at all. My sense is that the weak endorsement constraint has us

swallowing a camel of implausibility to avoid ingesting an epistemic gnat.

Rejection of the weak endorsement constraint is compatible with insistence on internal structure in the Objective List. Features 1 and 2 noted above would have it that to be living a good life, one must have at least a threshold amount of subjective satisfaction (pleasure and desire satisfaction). No doubt one should also add a Feature 3, that to be living a good life, one must have at least a threshold amount of objective goods other than subjective satisfaction. These requirements allow that any attainment of some of any good that is an entry on the Objective List intrinsically enhances one's well-being. The entries on the Objective List also exhibit positive and negative complementarities. The prudential value of pleasure is enhanced, I am inclined to hold, when what one takes pleasure in is itself objectively valuable, and the prudential value of pleasure is reduced to some extent when the pleasure is accompanied by ignorance or significantly mistaken belief about the character of the source of the pleasure.[30]

CONCLUSION

Some goods in an individual's life are objectively worthwhile. They are good for their own sakes quite independently of the individual's own attitudes toward them and opinions as to their worth. These goods form the entries on a list, the Objective List. An element in an individual's life intrinsically augments her well-being just in case that element corresponds to some entry on the Objective List. An individual's life goes better, has more well-being, counts as flourishing to a greater extent, the more the individual gets goods that are entries on the Objective List. The entries on the List are ranked in importance, and getting items that correspond to more important entries does more to augment one's well-being, other things being equal. No doubt many entries on

the List have psychological prerequisites: For example, one cannot write a good novel without intending to write something and without doing some writing intentionally. But there is no attitude that an individual must have toward an element in her life if that element is to qualify as intrinsically augmenting her well-being according to the Objective List theory. To count as such, the goods in an individual's life need not be tinged with enjoyment nor colored by desire. In other words, for something to qualify as intrinsically enhancing an individual's well-being, it (1) is neither necessary nor sufficient that the individual actually desire that thing, and (2) is neither necessary nor sufficient that the individual actually enjoy (or have some other sort of positive experience of) that thing. These are the main claims I have tried to defend in this essay.

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[1] . In this essay I use "intrinsically" interchangeably with "for its own sake." What is good in these ways is distinguished from what is good as a means to some further goal. The distinction between what is intrinsically and extrinsically good, intended to mark a different contrast from the distinction between what is good for its own sake and good as a means, plays no role in this essay.

[2] . L. W. Sumner, Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 82.

[3] . Derek Parfit, Reasons and Persons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 493.

[4] . Thomas Scanlon, "Value, Desire, and Quality of Life," in The Quality of Life, eds. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 185-200. My views defended here have been strongly influenced by Scanlon's essay.

[5] J. S. Mill, Utilitarianism, in his Collected Works, vol. 10 , ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 210-214; and Mill, On Liberty, in his Collected Works, vol. 18, ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), ch. 3, pp. 260-275.

[6] . Thomas Hurka, Perfectionism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 16.

[7]. Mill, Utilitarianism, ch. 2.

[8] , Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. 42. The point is also well stated in Ronald Dworkin, "What Is Equality? Part 1: Equality of Welfare," Philosophy and Public Affairs, vol. 10. no. 3 (Summer, 1981), pp. 185-246; see pp. 192-193.

[9] . Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia, p. 43.

[10] . That is, a bottle of the old-fashioned variety that lacks a twist-off top.

[11] . Mill is so interpreted in J. J. C. Smart, “Outline of a System of Utilitarian Ethics,” in Utilitarianism--For and Against, J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

[12] . Sumner, Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics, p. 112.

[13] . James Griffin acknowledges the circularity worry and suggests it might not constitute a decisive objection in his Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 22.

[14] . Views of this type are developed in Richard B, Brandt, A Theory of the Good and the Right (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), chs. 6-7; John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 417 ff.; James

Griffin, Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). Griffin's account is thorough in its examination of difficulties and creative in its attempts to resolve them, but the position he ends up defending is complex, and not unambiguously a full information account.

[15] . Peter Railton, "Facts and Values," Philosophical Topics, vol. 14 (1986), pp. 5-31; see p. 16.

[16] . See Connie S. Rosati, "Persons, Perspectives, and Full Information Accounts of the Good," Ethics, vol. 105, no. 2 (January, 1995), pp. 296-325; see pp. 307-313.

[17] . This difficulty is explored in Rosati, "Persons, Perspectives, and Full Information Accounts of the Good," pp. 299-314.

[18] . Railton, “Facts and Values,” p. 9.

[19] . Sumner, Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics, pp. 130-133.

[20] . See J. David Velleman, "Brandt's Definition of `Good'," Philosophical Review, vol. 97, no. 3 (July, 1988), pp. 353-371. Velleman develops criticisms of full information accounts, with a focus on Brandt's proposal, beyond those this essay considers.

[21] . For criticisms along this line see David Sobel, "Full Information Accounts of Well-Being," Ethics, vol. 104, no. 4 (July, 1994), pp. 784-810; and Rosati, "Persons, Perspectives, and Full Information Accounts of the Good,", see pp. 307-324.

[22] . Richard Kraut accepts the claim that this dilemma poses an exhaustive

choice and opts for the latter horn in “Desire and the Human Good,” Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, vol. 68, no. 2 (November, 1994), pp. 39-54.

[23] . For an opposed view on this issue, one which supposes that the badness of the sensation of pain resides in its being disliked, and that pain that does not evoke dislike is not intrinsically bad, see Parfit, Reasons and Persons, p. 493. C.D. Broad analyzed the notion of pleasure in a similar way in Five Types of Ethical Theory (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1930), pp. 237-238.

[24] . The objection discussed in this section is borrowed from Donald C. Hubin, "Hypothetical Motivation," Nous, vol. 30, no. 1 (March, 1996), pp. 31-54.

[25] . Allan Gibbard, Wise Choices, Apt Feelings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 20. It should be noted that Gibbard is discussing a specific full-information analysis by Richard Brandt, not an ideal advisor theory.

[26] . Griffin, Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance, p 14.

[27] . Ronald Dworkin, “Foundations of Liberal Equality,” in The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, vol. 11, ed. by Grethe B. Peterson (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), pp.1-119; see pp. 80-83.

[28] .Griffin, Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance, ch.

[29] . Derek Parfit appears to affirm a version of the endorsement constraint at p. 502 of Reasons and Persons. “Pleasure with many other kinds of object [those that lack objective value] has no value. And if they are entirely devoid of pleasure, there is no value in knowledge, rational activity, love, or the awareness

of beauty. What is of value, or is good for someone, is to have both: to be engaged in these activities, and to be strongly wanting to be so engaged." Richard Kraut asserts a somewhat similar view in his "Desire and the Human Good"; see p. 45 and footnote 13. Kraut holds that to be living a good life one must love something and what one loves must be worth caring about, but "that cannot be the whole story," because in addition "one must be related in the right way to what one loves." Sumner's Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics is an extended sophisticated argument for the weak endorsement constraint.

[30] . Acknowledging complementarity, I need not disagree with Stephen Darwall's analysis of how a person's life is enriched by engagement in activities that are truly valuable, that she appreciates as truly valuable, and that she enjoys in virtue of her appreciation of their value. See Darwall, "Valuing Activity," this volume.